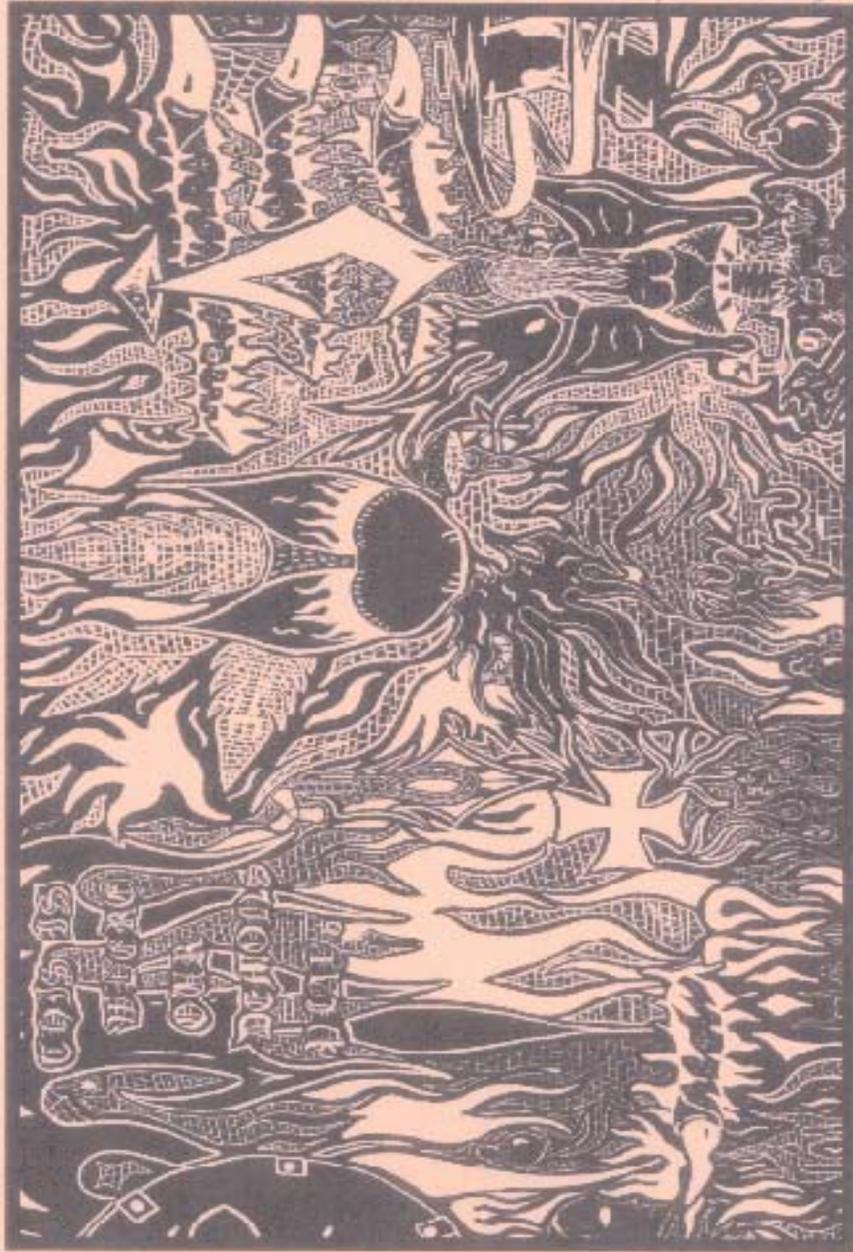


# Palabras

WORDS

Spring 2004

[www.clovis.edu/web2/palabras/index.asp](http://www.clovis.edu/web2/palabras/index.asp)



Literary License

*Palabras* publishes original research, essays, fiction, poetry, and art by Clovis Community College students and residents of New Mexico.

*Palabras* is also an academic journal and accepts submissions from students across the United States who are currently working on undergraduate degrees.

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# Palabras

*Journal of Exchange*

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## *Special Issue:* **Literary License Winners**

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**Special thanks to Michelle Ulrich for helping the Editor to round up paper, and to the Bookstore staff for spending many minutes (if not hours) counting sheet by sheet.**

***Spring 2004***

*Volume 2 Issue 2*

**Cover Art by Justin Bumgarner**



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### SUBMISSIONS

*Palabras* favors an open submissions policy: anyone who would like to submit, may. Please submit work in hard copy format to the editor in **Faculty Office 509**, in e-mail format to **palabrasje@hotmail.com**, or in hard copy format to the **CCC Bookstore**. Please include a phone number or e-mail address so the editor may contact you.

Submissions should be no longer than 5 double-spaced pages, or approximately 1500 words. If documented, then in MLA, APA, or other acceptable format. If you have an essay, paper, or story longer than the specifications mentioned, please contact the editor at **505-769-4906** or at **palabrasje@hotmail.com**, as excerpts may be publishable.

*If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please write to the editor at [palabrasje@hotmail.com](mailto:palabrasje@hotmail.com).*

## ...from the Editor

GINA L HOCHHALTER

This special issue of *Palabras* is dedicated to the April 2003 Clovis Community College Month Literary License winners. The categories (non-fiction, fiction, drama, poetry) and places of the winners (first, second, third) are noted before each writing.

These essays and stories and plays and poems have shown me explicitly that it matters how we go about living life. The choices we make are important, as they can significantly affect the present and the future. It's my belief that, along with other experiences, reading can provide us with ways to make better informed choices because we get to see the world differently – we are inspired to see the world through another's eyes, and then, as "writers" of our daily living, we can [re]create the roles we play...

With that said, I want to extend a heartfelt "good-bye" to Raymond Atchley-as-self-proclaimed-Ass.-Editor, who helped to manifest *Palabras* Fall of 2002. Raymond wonders about his importance to this project: if it hadn't been for Raymond's ability to brave any storm while simultaneously finding *everything* to have its fair share of brazen humour, *Palabras* would not have gone to press. In terms of his editorial abilities: being, commaphrenic, doesn't, erase, sheer, brilliance.

Raymond will – don't worry – continue to inspire *Palabras*'s brevity, and as long as *Palabras* is around (and as long as Raymond continues to write) we will be seeing his "commatized drawl" again (and again).

Cheers to our peterless pan, Raymond, and **congratulations** to the writers printed herein...

This Issue of *Palabras* is a Celebration!



## ...from the Old Associate,

Raymond E Atchley

(“Old “as in “once upon a time,” not “Old” as in Ancient or Archaic, although Raymond has a little bit of those going for him, too! ha ha)

I have checked the obituary and failed to find *Palabras* included. What has made me happier is that I'm not there, either. This issue of *Palabras* takes us into another year. I find it hard to believe that it's been over a year since Gina Hochhalter asked me to contribute my efforts to this project. I still don't quite understand what Gina valued about my editorial abilities. I'm one of those writers that tends to write like I talk, or in my case, "tawk." Having such a "Bubba Bear," "mash cornbread into my milk" drawl necessitates the use of lots of commas. I use them by the fistful. I write, I think, I get coffee, I go to the bathroom, I visit on the phone, and then return to my writing. After two or three words I commatize (I like this non-existent word, leave it be) the sentence where I pause, and start the process again. I edit papers in much the same manner. I have been fortunate in being able to read some wonderful work in my time with *Palabras*, but, it is time for a comma in these efforts, maybe a semi-colon.

To paraphrase Plato: "We live in a world of becoming, everything is in the process of becoming something else." So too for me. As I pursue my Doctorate in Thinkology, I must turn my efforts to finishing my Bachelor's degree, an idea that I find oxymoron-ic considering how long I've been married.

With this, I extend to all writers and aspiring authors who have contributed, and who will yet contribute, my best wishes as I leave the position of Associate Editor. Thanks, for, the, help, Gina.



### About the Cover Artist:

Justin is 16 and is a Junior in Las Cruces, NM. He draws in his free time and loves art.

*Literary License*  
*Non-fiction First Place*

## SECRET BULLY?

ANGELA SUE MONROE

Why would Joan Didion write "...there is no getting around the fact that setting words on paper is the tactic of a secret bully, an invasion, an imposition of the writer's sensibilities on the reader's most private space" ("Why I Write," 84, par. 2)? I agree that we all have an inclination to act on what we read. For example, we see a stop sign and we stop (or we don't); either way we have acted on the written word. However, I do not agree that putting words on paper makes the writer a bully, secret or otherwise. Expressing your opinions on a subject does not make you a bully! On the contrary, engaging your mind in the act of writing—or reading—instead of engaging your mouth in the act of blabbering can be quite stimulating.

But is writing an invasion or an imposition of the writer's sensibilities on the reader? Maybe so, but I can't bring myself to make a blanket statement like that. Could you honestly consider Beatrix Potter's "The Tale of Peter Rabbit," a time-honored children's classic, an imposition? Or could you read O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi" and feel invaded? I don't think so. At face value it is a ridiculous concept. Let's just think about it for a moment, though: what did she really mean by that? We know what she said, but what did she really mean when she said it?

I've been sitting here pondering Didion's words, her thoughts and thought processes, trying to discover her motive for making such an inflammatory remark. Why would she purposely make a statement that would immediately cast herself, as a writer, in a bad light? Sitting here, contemplating all this, it dawned on me what was happening. I was giving her "brain time"; taking time away from some other dreary, mundane (albeit necessary) mental activity to consider someone else's viewpoint. Whether I agree or disagree with what she is saying, the fact remains that I have given it some lengthy consideration, which is precisely what she meant! I've given her (or did she take it?) a place in my mind. I've

allowed her ideas to take up space in my memory; I've taken up a position based on my reaction to her words. The same thing could be said about anything we read that touches us – our psyche – whether good or bad.

I haven't read, or even thought of O. Henry's short stories since high school. It has been twenty-five years since I opened my mind to what the author (writer) had to say on the subject of selfless giving. Yes, it was a fictional story, but the writer used that medium to share something significant about the importance of valuing others before ourselves. As a teenager I was quite selfish (not unlike most teenagers) and while I enjoyed the story, it took a while for the deeper meaning to sink in, for it to touch me. Once it did, though, it invaded my mind and demanded an audience. In essence, it said, "Listen to me, see it my way, change your mind" (Didion 84, par. 2).

O. Henry had located "the cat in the shimmer, the grammar in the picture" (Didion 85, par. 8) – the truth in the reality – and shared it with me so many years later. He affected my way of looking at life, he infected me with a desire to reach into a book and pull out the meaning behind the words. Just as Didion stated, "The arrangement of the words matters, and the arrangement can be found in the picture in your mind" (85, par. 9). I think O. Henry had a picture in his mind of a biblical truth that says, "Be imitators of God... and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:1-2). He painted a picture of a couple who each valued the needs of the other above their own desires. He compelled me to find out what was going on in the pictures in his mind (85, par. 7) and I've carried that story with me in my "most private space" (84, par. 2) for twenty-five years.

So I guess, on deeper reflection, I must agree with Didion – however grudgingly – that writing is an invasion of sorts, although I don't see it as negative a statement as I did in the beginning. I see the tactic of a writer to be interactive. I think that that imposition is why Morrow feels that books "give the reader some intellectual dignity and a higher sense of his [her] possibilities" (60, par. 9). Morrow and I are united in believing that "contemplate[ing] anything intelligent... realign[s our] mind[s]" (61, par. 12). It opens us up to new ideas and causes us to reach out to someone (the writer) and lay hold to something more than ourselves: a lifeline that anchors us to another human being.

I have a connection with someone I have never met. I feel that I know something about the writer, something deeper than casual conversation would allow, and I welcome the connection. I'll go back and revisit the pages of a story; acquaint myself with an old friend I haven't thought of in quite some time. I will always think of O. Henry as a friend, not a "secret bully."

Didion, Joan. "Why I Write." *The Rinehart Reader*. 3rd Ed. Jean Wyrick and Beverly J. Slaughter, ed. New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999.

Morrow, Lance. "The Best Refuge for Insomniacs." *The Rinehart Reader*. 3rd Ed. Jean Wyrick and Beverly J. Slaughter, ed. New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999.

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*Literary License*  
*Non-fiction Second Place*

**CASE FOR & AGAINST  
PUBLISHING  
SAME-SEX UNION  
ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*CHRISTI WESLEY*

**CASE FOR PUBLISHING SAME SEX  
UNION ANNOUNCEMENTS:  
MISCONCEPTIONS ENDANGER  
FREEDOM**

Recently the *Clovis News Journal* ran an editorial piece asking the local community if it thought that same-sex union announcements should be published. This is America, why do we even have to ask that question? America is based upon the right to freedom, no matter one's sex, race, or sexual preference. I think that it's ironic that most of the citizens who answered the article seemed so narrow-minded that I doubt if they have ever really taken the time to get to know homosexuals. The publishing of same sex union announcements is a freedom guaranteed by

our forefathers and this right should not be threatened by the opinions of discriminating individuals.

Throughout our nation's history various citizens have fought for freedoms promised to them in the constitution. Women, African Americans, and now our country's homosexuals struggle to gain acceptance for who, not what they are. I didn't see the *Clovis News Journal* asking if interracial wedding announcements should be published, but then that would be wrong, wouldn't it? The fact is that just a few short decades ago interracial marriage was viewed as morally unacceptable, but now it is seen as much more mainstream.

The press has an obligation to further society's development by promoting a better understanding of all Americans, regardless of sexual preference. If society does not cross lines and break barriers we can never hope to achieve unity. The publishing of same-sex union announcements is just another step in an ongoing civil rights movement and the press should not have the power to limit this nation's growth or citizens' innate freedoms.

The majority of citizens who said "no" to the publishing of same-sex union announcements did so on largely moral grounds. This disturbs me because I feel that Clovis residents are limited in their exposure to homosexuality and may have negative stereotypes based upon the media's portrayal of gays and lesbians. In my experiences talking with people regarding homosexuals, there seems to be the impression that gays and lesbians are promiscuous, unfaithful, and non-productive members of society while some seem to think that homosexuals are potential pedophiles and child molesters. These misconceptions are one of the most destructive forces working against equality for homosexuals in America's small towns. Small town residents need to understand that gays and lesbians throughout the world are productive members of society who hold positions of great dignity and trust. It is not right to deny their freedoms based upon society's moral objections or ignorance. If the issue of publishing same-sex wedding announcements is to be purely moral then maybe we should limit publishing announcements for convicted felons, adulterers, and other heterosexual, morally challenged members of society.

The debate over the moral and ethical implications of homosexuality will never be quelled. They will continue to be argued just like other moral issues such as abortion and stem cell research. However, the debate over publishing same-sex union announcements is one that won't continue; newspapers across the country will have to make decisions regarding their stance on the issue. I think that it is important that the press remember, just as their rights are protected under the constitution, so are the rights of America's gays and lesbians. Moral issues aside, our nation is based upon freedom and acceptance and no citizen of this country should find these rights compromised.

## **CASE AGAINST PUBLISHING SAME-SEX UNION ANNOUNCEMENTS: MISREPRESENTATION AND ENDANGERMENT**

The publishing of same-sex union announcements is being considered by many newspapers across the country, including the *Clovis News Journal*. Recently, the *Clovis News Journal* asked local readers their opinions on this controversial issue and most responded with a resounding "no" based upon religious reasons. America was built by people trying to escape religious persecution so we can't use religion as a basis for discrimination without compromising the integrity of the United States as a free nation. If we are to prevent the same-sex union announcements from being published, we must base the decision upon more tangible grounds.

Same-sex unions are not marriages and are not legally recognized in the state of New Mexico. Wedding announcements have traditionally been notification that a couple intends to enter into a legal union. Same-sex unions are not legally binding. Also, the publishing of same-sex union announcements has the possibility of endangering the very people who want to announce their love and commitment to their local community. The American press has an obligation to publish information in a way that is respectful to the laws of our nation while

protecting the safety of the citizens.

The United States is a society governed by numerous laws and regulations. The laws governing marriage in New Mexico are very clear. They state that marriage is a legal contract between one man and one woman. This statute does not make exceptions for partners of the same sex. The *Clovis News Journal* has no legal obligation to publish announcements of unions that do not result in legally binding contracts. I fear that the publishing of same-sex union announcements would lead citizens to believe that these unions hold the same legal significance as marriages between a man and woman. This is simply not the case; same-sex unions are ceremonies only and are not recognized by the United States as legally binding. The media is under fire constantly for misrepresenting the truth and I think that publishing these announcements will leave citizens with a misconception about the legal state of same-sex unions.

Small towns across America have long been breeding grounds for discrimination particularly because of their self-imposed isolation to the world around them. Most citizens in these towns don't want to know what goes on outside of their circle and can be hostile if confronted with things they disagree with or don't understand. This could lead to potential hate crimes if same-sex union announcements were published. These announcements would give hatemongers invaluable information to disrupt ceremonies of homosexuals. Imagine the tragedies that could result if the time and location of a same-sex ceremony were published. There is no guarantee that violence would ensue; however, I don't think that it's worth the chance. The *Clovis News Journal* has to keep the safety of everyone in mind. The publishing of same-sex union announcements is not worth the retaliation that might occur. The couple wishing to unite should notify family and friends in a more private manner to ensure the sanctity of the union and the safety of all involved.

The struggles of oppressed groups will continue throughout my life. I just want to ensure that our nation's media seeks to strengthen this country while maintaining loyalty to the integrity of our governing laws. Victory over arcane laws will not be obtained one same-sex union announcement at a time; it will take a much greater judicial movement to change these regulations. Therefore, our nation's newspapers should not be expected to publish announcements that do not result in legal unions and carry the possibility of violence and harm.

*Literary License*  
*Non-fiction Third Place*

## YOUR MEANING, YOUR REALITY

*BETH SMITH GRUBBS*

The meaning of life to me is different for everyone because each person produces his or her own world and his or her own reality. I believe we are put here to find our own meaning and to live by it. We should always teach and learn in order to find *more* meaning. I am convinced everyone should find purpose in his or her life and explore all possibilities. I do believe there is a mission for everyone who is placed here on earth.

Everyone who has been put here has the ability to change what the world thinks about anything. One example of this is Albert Einstein. Our math system would not be what it is today without his knowledge and determination to prove himself to individuals. Van Gogh's perception of art inspired others to create and make a canvas very beautiful. Many others have made his/her mark on this earth by exploring new ground, such as Anthony Robbins, Carleton Sheets, and even Bill Clinton for that matter.

The meaning of life depends on your passion to flourish as a human being. For example, in the past three years I have grown more as a human being because someone suggested to me that I should be more open-minded. I took that challenge and have found that by becoming more open-minded I am

able to discover more opportunities in life and have a stronger, more refined feeling of different varieties of people.

Everyone famous in our world has had his/her destination to make our world what it is today. They have also reformed the reflections and understandings of so many people. Just as some consider that television is a curse upon humankind, it might have molded the aspiration for individuals to be here. It might have bestowed direction to their lives and converted many other lives through the influence of television, such as educational films or as a movie star of today had been inspired to fulfill his/her ambition in life, as each one watched his/her favorite television show. Also another example is a book. For some people all they did was read a book and it influenced him/her to take charge of his/her life and lose weight, or to teach communities a skill they never knew, or discover new worlds that no one knew existed.

It is amazing how many different ways the world can be seen through the different meanings of life everyone has. A person should explore all possibilities, whether it be taking up a new hobby, changing personal preferences, changing appearances, or anything that could help you find your objective in this world. A person's happiness can depend on what he/she does and acquires from this lifetime. I do not cogitate that a person has to know their direct purpose in life to become an inspiration to others, but I do think that the teacher learns from teaching as well. Even as the chair that sits upon the ground in the picture makes us ponder about why the chair is there and what its meaning is, the chair is there also to instruct us and direct us, as all things that come in our pathway do. Every little thing always presents itself in our lives on purpose.

To define the meaning of life is to define our lives as we see them and by how we expect life to be. You should explore all occurrences in life. This could be the difference in your exuberance and your despair. We should always be willing to take in information and education and adventure in our own worlds to find this meaning and plan for being here. Right here, right now, might be a direction for you to change or to become a more complete person. Maybe a person is defined and seen by his/her significance in life. Maybe the sense of his/her meaning shows through and people somehow sense this,

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almost like seeing or feeling a person's aura. The meaning of life to me is my own reality, which the meaning to everyone else is his/her own.

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## *Literary License*

### *Fiction First Place*

# HELLIHOLEIOUS

CRYSTAL WOODWARD

Have you ever wondered why some people are happy living in the Clovis/Portales area and some people are not? Would you believe it if a scientist told you that the cause of this was a simple microorganism? A microorganism controlling the basic emotions of hundreds of people? It seems impossible, but maybe it is not.

Scientists have found a microorganism in the soil of the Clovis/Portales area. The scientists named this organism *Helliholeious*. *Helliholeious* releases a substance called a pheromone into the air that can affect the behavior of other species. Different pheromones cause different responses in different creatures. The release of pheromones is an uncontrolled reaction caused by a stimulus in the environment. In the case of *Helliholeious*, the stimulus is bovine waste products. The secondary stomach of bovines produces a chemical, methylanus, which *Helliholeious* excretes into the soil along with the bovine's waste products. *Methylanus* causes the *Helliholeious* organism to release a specialized pheromone, *melancholyvivaciousresponsilious* (MVR).

In the human organism, MVR causes either great happiness or extreme unhappiness; very few are immune. This feeling of happiness is addictive. People born in the Clovis/Portales area only leave for a short time for college and then come back, or they just never leave. Military personnel retire in this area because of this happiness. The happiness causes actions that may not be normal. This may be part of the cause of a high teen pregnancy rate. The other cause for this is the unhappy side effect of the MVR. When teens are unhappy they look for a way

to become happy. Sex is a form of exercise, and exercise releases endorphins, which make you happy. The unhappy side affect may also be the cause of the high underage smoking and drinking incidence, as well as illegal drug use. Many of the people who respond to the MVR pheromone in an unhappy way leave the area and never return. The ones who stay or return may be affected enough by the pheromone to be the people responsible for the crime in this area.

A recent study done on this pheromone shows that residents born and raised in the Clovis/Portales area show positive effects from the MVR pheromone. Non-natives are most often negatively affected by the pheromone. This is both good and bad. The Air Force base in the area provides for many unhappy people. The MVR pheromone may affect young Airmen in such a way that they commit crimes. The same should go for the students at the local university.

However, scientists discovered that there is a variable in the Portales area. Portales grows and processes peanuts. The peanut plant releases a nutrient, *structuruous rearangous*, into the soil during the fall months. The *structuruous rearangous* causes an increase in production of the MVR pheromone. A sign of this mutation is an increased production and an altered structure that also changes the potency of the pheromone. The change in potency changes the effect on the area residents.

This study is very interesting to the local residents. Some find it impossible to believe that a microorganism is controlling their lives. Others find it a relief to know that there is nothing wrong with them and that they feel the way they do for a reason.

This is an answer to explain their children's actions. What do you think? Are you experiencing these feelings, or are you one of the few who are immune? What about your children? Are they very unhappy? Doctors are looking for a way to block the effects of this pheromone, but they are also looking into the possibilities of using the MVR pheromone as an antidepressant. It is amazing what one microorganism can do to the lives of people, both positively and negatively.

*Literary License*  
*Fiction Second Place*

## HEADING HOME

MARTIE WATSON

As the meeting began, Ella felt as if all eyes were on her. She was the stranger among them, and that made her uncomfortable. They didn't understand, anymore than she did, why her name was mentioned in Mrs. Taylor's will. Even stranger to Ella was the added note that she should prepare to be away for at least a week and all expenses for her trip or her time off work would be reimbursed.

"If you're ready, we'll get started," Mr. Burks began. Nods and half-hearted smiles filled the room. Mr. Burks opened his briefcase and picked up a folder. Opening the folder he peered at each of them over the top of his glasses. "Guess this would be a lot better if it were right side up." His attempt to lighten the mood didn't work, so he opened the folder and began taking papers out.

Clearing his throat, he began reading. "I, Maris Elizabeth Walker, being of sound mind and body do hereby render this as my last will and testament." Mr. Burks looked around the room as if he expected someone to object. Readjusting his glasses, he continued. "To my children, Thomas Wayne Walker, Theresa Marie Walker Jordan, Joshua Hampton Walker, and Jonathon Garrett Walker, I leave my home, my worldly possessions, and monetary worth, except for the following."

Mr. Burks stopped reading and placed the papers on the desk. He looked at Ella and smiled, "That's where you come in, Ms. Taylor." He reached inside his desk and retrieved a small box and placed it next to the papers. "Mrs. Walker spoke with me sometime ago and discussed this box. She left the last minute preparations for me to complete upon her passing, which I have done to the last detail."

Ella took a deep breath and attempted to smile. Although Ella had several questions she wanted to ask, she was afraid if she opened her mouth, a thousand butterflies would escape the caverns of her stomach where they had taken refuge only moments before.

"So what's in the box, Gus?" came a snide remark from across the room.

"Tommy, I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to reveal that. Let me continue."

Tommy rolled his eyes and glared at Ella. If there were such a thing as a disappearing pill, Ella gladly would have swallowed two or three at that moment. "I leave the contents of this box to Ms. Eloise Jean Taylor," Mr. Burks looked up at Ella. "Then it lists your address," he added. Ella knew he was trying to satisfy her doubts about being mentioned in the will.

"This box is to remain unopened and the contents kept confidential until the instructions in the envelope—" Mr. Burks picked up the envelope and waved it in the air, "until the instructions included in *this* envelope have been carried out."

"You mean we're supposed to let a complete stranger walk out of here with our mother's possessions and not even be told what's in the box?" Thomas rolled his eyes again and waved his hands in the air in disbelief. "Gus, you can't honestly expect us to do that."

Feeling responsible for the atmosphere of the room, Ella broke her silence. "Look, Mr. Burks, I really don't want to cause this family any undue stress. In all honesty, I don't understand why I'm here or why I was included in the will, I didn't even know Mrs. Walker."

Thomas sighed and slammed his hand down on the arm of the chair. "Well, you obviously knew her well enough to know that she wasn't poor. Doubtful you would have come to a will reading for a poor woman." Thomas's family gathered around him to try to calm him down.

"I understand, Ms. Taylor," Mr. Burks began. "Mrs. Walker knew this would be confusing for you and that's why she prepared the extra envelope. Perhaps you didn't know Mrs. Walker, but trust me, she knew you and she fully intended for you to take the box."

Mr. Burks stood up, straightened his jacket and announced, "Once I get your signatures, our business will be complete."

Ella was at a loss for words. She was beginning to doubt her decision to come to the reading of the will. But she was curious and wanted to know who Mrs. Walker was and what she was to her. She waited and watched each person sign their name and leave. As Thomas began to exit Mr. Burks's office, he stopped at the door and glared at Ella one last time. "I always knew she was crazy, and this proves it."

"Ms. Taylor, I'll need your signature as well," Mr. Burks said quietly.

Ella stood and made her way to his desk. "Yes sir, but I'm still confused."

"Understandably so," he answered. "I promise you, Mrs. Taylor had a reason for everything she did, and you are no exception. I must remind you, you're not to open the box until you've carried out the instructions inside the envelope."

"Yes, I understand, but...er...um...oh...ugh." She signed the papers and picked up the box. Not too heavy, she thought. Ella chuckled at the consideration she might have traveled all this way for an empty box.

As she arrived at the hotel room, she set the box down and stared at the envelope. She wasn't sure she wanted to open it. What kind of instructions were inside? What 'tasks' had she just undertaken? She just kept thinking that somehow she was left 'holding the bag.' Ella looked at the box. For whatever reason, Mrs. Taylor had entrusted her with a special task. Whether she knew her or not, she couldn't walk away from that responsibility.

As she opened the envelope, she could faintly smell the antique perfume Mrs. Walker must have been wearing when she wrote the letter.

*Dear Ms. Taylor,*

*If you are reading this, then I am right in my assumption of you. I am sure that you are quite curious about how it came to be that some crazy old woman from Texas would mention you in her will. Well, contrary to my children's accusations, I am not crazy. And I will do my best to answer all of your questions in my letters.*

Letters? Ella looked at the envelope and then the box. Perhaps that is what was in the box, a bunch of letters. What would that accomplish? And why the secrecy? Ella was beginning to think Mrs. Walker's children might be right.

*By now, you have met my children. My deepest apologies for whatever they may have put you through, especially Thomas. Even as an adult, he has always been my problem child. I do hope you will not hold any of that against me or my wishes. Hopefully you have taken Mr. Burks's advice and given yourself a little extra time on your trip. You*

*will need several days, if not more, to carry out my wishes.*

Ella chuckled to herself and dropped the letter in her lap. What had she gotten herself into? Flipping the page over, she continued reading.

*I know you have come a long way and made special arrangements to be here. While my instructions may seem like a wild goose chase to you, I can promise you that they are not. It is difficult for me to find the right words to explain all of this to you, so please be patient with me.*

*Let me begin by relieving some of the concern you are probably feeling. If you don't know who I am, that's understandable. Officially, you and I have never met, but I have known who you were all your life.*

These words seemed strange to Ella. All of this mystery sounded like a lead-in to an "I'm your birth mother" story. Ella laughed at the thought of that. Ella's mother died shortly after giving birth to Ella; at least that's what she had always been told. Ella briefly replayed the stories she had been told by her father and her grandparents. All the stories matched and made complete sense. Turning back to the letter, her eyes scanned the length of the page. When she saw the words "your mother" she closed her eyes and folded the letter. She wasn't sure she could go on. She refused to believe that her family had lied to her. She unfolded the letter and forced herself to continue reading.

*It was 1982.*

Ella swallowed hard and tried to prepare herself for what was coming next. She read it again. 1982; the year Ella was born.

*I had had a heart attack and was in the intensive care unit. My children were so cold and uncaring even then. So day after day, I lay alone in my hospital bed, waiting for my body to get strong enough for surgery. It was then that I met your mother.*

*Your mother was seven months pregnant with you and had been hospitalized due to complications. Your mother went past my room several times a day, sometimes headed to the shower, other times headed for tests.*

*Generally she was with someone, either a nurse, or your father, or your grandparents. One after-*

noon, however, she was alone. As she walked past my room, she smiled. "May I come in?" she asked. I nodded and signaled for her to sit beside the bed. We talked for quite some time before the nurse came and told her she had visitors. That was the beginning of a wonderful friendship. Several times a day, your mother came to my room to visit. It made my days in the hospital much easier. She would talk of her dreams and plans for the future, about how she wanted to return to her hometown to raise her children, and how she wanted to give her baby everything she never had.

Our visits went on for several weeks. My strength was improving and doctors were preparing to schedule my surgery. I remember the day they brought your mother by my room on her way to the delivery room. She smiled and told me to hurry and get better because I would need my strength to hold the new baby.

After she left I was very tired, so I decided to take a nap while I waited for news of the birth of the new baby. The next thing I remembered was waking up surrounded by doctors. I dozed off again and when I awoke I was back in ICU. If it hadn't been for the tubes and restraints, I would have jumped up and ran around the room. I remember breathing and feeling like my lungs would never fail. Each breath brought tingles throughout my body. I hadn't felt such energy in years. I felt absolutely wonderful and I was ready for your Mom to bring that new baby to my room so I could hold it.

When the nurse came in my room, I learned I had been in a coma for several weeks. Then she said the doctor would be in shortly to check on me and answer my questions. Before she left I asked her about the baby. She told me that your mom had a healthy baby girl and then she quietly left.

I was excited to hear what the doctor had to say, but my excitement turned to concern as the doctor entered my room and closed the door. He started by telling me that I was rushed to surgery following a massive heart attack. He told me that my heart had extensive damage, much more than he felt he could repair. The only option I had was a heart transplant. He continued by telling me how difficult it is to find a match for a transplant. Everything must be perfect, especially the timing. Then he said something that was very strange to me. 'But nothing is impossible with God.'

He told me that a heart had become available while I was in surgery, and despite all odds and everyone's disbelief, the heart was a perfect match for me. All the paperwork was arranged and the

surgery began. Now I was beginning to understand why I felt so different; I had a new heart. I was overjoyed.

My joy was immediately overcome with grief. When I asked about the donor, the doctor could scarcely look me in the eyes. It was then he told me your mother had died shortly after delivery. It was her heart beating in my chest; it was because of her that I had new life.

I had gotten to know your mom very well over the previous weeks. I had shared with her how my children had abandoned me and how they seemed to steal the life right out of me. I remembered her telling me how she wanted to revive me by sharing the joy of her new baby with me; how she wanted to bring me back to life. Her words seemed so ironic to me at that point.

It took me longer to heal emotionally than it did physically. At first I was angry; I didn't understand why it had to be this way. Your mom was so young and so full of dreams. I felt I had taken that from her.... and from you. I began to consider you my little sister. You see, your mother gave life to both of us. Over time, I learned to accept my situation and it was then that I began preparing for this day: The day that I would finally get to tell you this story and give you my thanks.

I was very lucky because my body did not reject the heart and I did not react to the medications. The additional time your Mom gave me did wonders for me. It didn't change my children, quite the contrary. I had learned to love and live again. I began giving my time and my money to help those in need. My children weren't happy about that because they knew the more I gave away, the less they got when I died. Oh, I loved my children, I just didn't like the way they acted most of the time.

Perhaps now you understand why you are special to me. Perhaps tomorrow you'll understand more. In the morning, there will be a car waiting for you. I want you to go with my driver and take the box with you, but please do not open the box until you have completed my instructions.

Sincerely, Mary

Ella laid the letter down and covered her face with her hands. She was overwhelmed with emotions she couldn't control, and she began to cry. Some tears were tears of grief. Ella had never grieved for her mother. Her father had remarried when Ella was three years old and his new wife treated Ella with

all the love a mother could. Ella never felt the loss of losing her mother. It was just part of her past. How cold that seemed to her now. She was realizing that even though she never knew her mother; her mother was still real.

Some of Ella's tears were tears of joy. Her father had always told her how special her mother was and how pretty, generous, and loving she was. She felt as if she were experiencing some of that love and kindness.

Sometime in the night, amidst her tears, she drifted to sleep. The next morning, Ella began the journey of a lifetime. The driver met her at the hotel and thus began her adventure.

Envelope by envelope, Ella was told more about her mother and then exposed to the next destination. She visited the church her parents were married in, their first home, and the hospital Ella was born in, which had been renamed "Taylor Memorial Hospital" after a sizable donation from Mrs. Walker.

Ella's last stop was in her mother's hometown, a place Ella had never been before. Her arrival was obviously expected and many people came to welcome her. She visited for hours learning more about her mother and scanning photo albums and school yearbooks.

Late in the evening, she settled into her hotel room where she found her last envelope.

*Dear Ella,*

*I do hope you have enjoyed your travels and visits with your mother's friends. I hope they have given you a small glimpse of what your mother was like. Your mother hoped to return someday and raise her family here, thus, I've ended your journey here. This brings us to the box. Inside the box are my ashes, including your mother's heart. My children disapproved of my desires to be cremated, so I am hoping you will honor my last wish. I have received permission from the local authorities to have the ashes scattered over the local lake. This way your mother's heart will forever be where it always was. She will be home.*

*I never got to thank your mother for the gift she gave to me. Your mother has been part of me for the last 21 years. I have purchased the home your mother grew up in. It is listed in your name, so my children can not contest it as part of the estate. If you choose not to stay here, that is fine; the home is yours to do with as you wish. I have also set up a*

*local bank account in your name, with enough money to care for you for many years. There is no way I can repay your mother, but I hope in some small way, I have managed to egress my thanks to you.*

*All my love, Mary.*

The next morning, Ella honored Mrs. Walker's last request. Friends of her mother lined the shore as Ella boarded the boat. From the middle of the lake, she opened the box, said a word of prayer and thanks, and scattered the ashes in the wind. She then turned toward shore and headed home.

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## *Literary License*

### *Fiction Third Place*

# WHO PROTECTS THE LOSERS?

*LESLIE RIGGINS*

*Dear Diary,*

*How could I have ever believed my boys needed a father-figure. I was so desperate; I never even saw what was happening to me. Now I wonder if I will live out my life, the puppet to a madman. If it was just the daily pain and torture, I would live satisfied. But the knowledge that my children will remain in danger from his outlandish temper makes life almost unbearable. For the past week I've heard Jonah cry out in his sleep, and I can't help wonder about the nightmares that taunt such an innocent child. When I awaken him, his tiny hands cling to me as the tears run down his pale face. He always says, "I love you Mother." Then falls back asleep.*

*I wonder what has happened to the boys the times I had to stay in the hospital. Times when I was not there to protect them. Ryan cringes now each time he sees Tomas. I have always believed my husband would never hurt my children, but lately Tomas has acted and myself [sic]. I keep remembering Tomas, the man I married. Now that I am pregnant with his child all I see is Tomas, the monster I live with. Each night I pray for the old Tomas to return. I fear my prayers will never be answered.*

*Tomas has started spending more time with his son, the policeman. Tomas thinks he may become a*

*dispatcher for the police department in town. In the meantime he rides with the officers and mounted patrol, at night. I am grateful for the break.*

*Anita*

"We'll all die before I let you leave me," Tomas growled. Then he watched with satisfaction as the gun he was waving in Anita's face knocked over a glass of milk from atop the dishwasher. Angered at his carelessness, Anita quickly started cleaning the white liquid off her freshly-waxed floor. He stood in front of the sink, daring her to toss the wet washrag past him. Staring into his cold gray eyes now lifeless from too much alcohol, Anita debated whether she should just push by him or not. Grabbing her long, slender arm, Tomas caressed her breast with the barrel of the gun. Bending awkwardly he reached to kiss her. Drunk, he fell to the floor.

"Mommy, Mommy, Jonas won't let me watch Spongebob," yelled five-year old Ryan running around the corner and into the kitchen. Gasping with fear, Anita watched as Tomas picked up the gun and aimed it at the freckle-faced boy's chest. Horrified, she turned slowly back and watched Tomas get up, a string of cuss words following his every movement. "Ryan, go back and play in the other room, honey," she said, hoping the child couldn't hear the fear in her voice. "I'll be there in just a minute." Then as the tears formed in her eyes, she watched as he stomped disgustedly back toward the living room.

"But why does Daddy get to play guns in the house? You never let us," he called back over his shoulder.

"Yeah, Annie, why does Daddy get to play with guns in the house? Why don't you tell him?" Tomas challenged, stabbing her chest with his finger. "Tell him, sweet Annie, you want to break up our little family," he demanded aiming the gun at her lower abdomen. "Then tell me whose bed you plan to go to when I'm gone, whore!"

Unwilling to acknowledge his false accusations, she snatched the phone off the wall. But before she could say anything, his hand wrapped around her arm like a vise. Then with a quick twist she dropped the phone as fiery hot rain shot up her arm. "I don't think you want to do that, sweet Annie. I made sure all the cops already know your story. There ain't a cop that will come near this place."

Then he twisted her body until she was trapped with her back against him. The rank smell of sweat and alcohol made her nauseous. Feeling his hard body pressed against her, she tried to pull free. But

his hold, like a vise, was too tight as he ran the barrel up the bare skin just below her shorts. At that point she realized that this was not the man she loved, just a drunken imitation. Alone and afraid, Anita realized she could never tell him about their baby.

Shoving her on the cold floor, her head jerked convulsively against the dishwasher.

"I've told my friends all about how good you are in bed, sweet Annie," his words sugary sweet as he knelt before her. "They all want to meet you." Then standing up, he turned toward the wall between the kitchen and living room. Anita heard the boys laugh at a Spongebob cartoon just on the other side of the wall. Raising his gun toward the wall, he deliberately and slowly pulled the trigger back on the gun. "Let me show you how much I love you. I'll relieve you of some unnecessary chaperones. Then you will be truly free."

Time seemed to stop as she waited for the inevitable, but it never came. "BANG!" His sardonic laugh pierced her quivering body, mocking her just as it did in her nightmares.

"No, Tomas, don't hurt the boys, please. I'll stay. I'll do whatever you want. Just don't hurt the boys. They love you, Tomas," she pleaded.

"It would just be a damned shame if something happened to your precious boys. They're why you won't have my baby. Aren't they, sweet Annie!" he yelled, his words slurred and angry. Then with quick deliberate movements, he kicked her legs repeatedly with his steel-toe boots. Tears streaming down her face, she tried to move away from his reach. But the kicks, even harder, forced her to stay, and there wincing from the pain, she sat. "What makes you think I want you now, bitch?"

Her mind clouded with panic and doubt, she tried to concentrate as the first crushing wave of pain filled her abdomen. Grabbing her stomach, she remembered the doctors warning her about losing the baby. Fighting the dizziness that threatened to overtake her, Anita finally stood up. Leaning on the dishwasher, the taste of bile filled her mouth. Ready to grovel and apologize, Anita stepped up to run her hand down his reddened face. Surely as drunk as he was, it would be an easy task to make him forget the gun.

Yes, then everything would be like it was before. The beatings, the hospital trips, lies, and

fears in Ryan's and Jonas's eyes. But her traitorous voice betrayed her, leaving her mute until she felt the sting of his monstrous hand slam into her cheek.

Stars flashed as the burning pain exploded in her head. Blood filled her mouth but still she stood. Feeling the long, cold edge of the kitchen knife behind her, she took a deep breath. Anita heard his haggard speech but no longer could see him. Still, she listened to his intolerable ranting until she could listen no longer. Then the welcomed flames of rage consumed her ravaged body, numbing the pain.

"I loved you," she repeated as she grabbed the knife off the dishwasher. Her eyes blinded with fury, as with one fluid movement she swung the knife over her shoulder. Burying it deep in his chest, she repeated the movement over and over. Each time feeling the knife stab into his body. Blood pulsed out of his body, staining her arms and clothes. His eyes shocked by her audacity, glossed over as he opened his mouth once more to speak, "Bitch!" Angered anew, Anita, a prisoner of her own treacherous mind, felt exhilarated and renewed with each thrust. Finally his huge body fell against her. Then with one final exhausted stab she left the knife protruding out of his chest as he crumpled to the floor.

Rushing over to the gun, she grabbed it off the floor where it had fallen. Like a frightened child, she clung to the gun with shaking hands. And she waited for him to wake up, waited for his life to continue, waited to die. Never even realizing that she was holding her breath this whole time, until she had to gasp for air. Finally she reached for the phone still dangling off the wall, but stopped when she heard the boy's excited voices from the other room.

"Ryan, look! Police cars!" yelled Jonas, running for the front door. Dropping the gun, Anita in shock, walked over to the sink and washed the blood off her arms and hands. Then gently running her fingers through the tangled long brown curls, she wondered if she could ever untangle the twists her life had taken.

So many times she had put on the mask of perfection for the boys, doctors, even for herself. It had almost become second nature to her as she walked to the front door and saw the boys talking to two police officers. Even as the abdominal cramps slowly spread through her body like the blood on the clean floor, Anita appeared emotionless. "Why don't you boys go out and play?" she said, hugging each

one before they ran out the door. After they were gone, she turned to the young officers, suddenly realizing they were Tomas's friends. But too exhausted to understand the repercussions of that thought, she said, "Officers, I just killed my husband."

Walking the two officers into the kitchen, she pointed to the gun now resting on the counter. "He threatened me with that gun. Threatened to kill the boys and me. I had to kill him." Then as another wave of abdominal cramps and nausea got too great, she went rushing for the sink. Over the sound of running water, she [could hear] the officers talking [in] quiet voices; but she couldn't make out the words. Somehow the words didn't matter anymore; because her life with Tomas was finally over. And she won.

After one of the officers left, the other loomed over Anita, much like a vulture waiting for his dinner to die. "Mrs. Rawlings, your neighbors called. Maybe you should sit down and tell us what happened," directed the tall, dark-haired officer. Anita wondered if it was a cruel trick of her imagination that this officer looked so much like Tomas. She tried to make out the name on his badge, but her eyes couldn't focus. The cramps, now much worse, seemingly had gone unnoticed by the officer.

The officer's eyes, cold and calculating, seemed to see through her. He seemed intent on finding half-truths and lies she couldn't remember saying until frustrated, Tomas's words came like an epitaph to her, "The cops know your story. I told all my friends..." Finally, she sat in silence.

Turning away from the officer's toxic stare, Anita watched two policemen play ball with Ryan and Jonas. "Catch it, Jonas," she said as the boys were playing ball with the neighbor's children. Closing her eyes momentarily, she heard EMTs and policemen storming through her house. Feeling oddly distant from the whole scene, she remembered the wash that still hadn't been put in the dryer. And the rug that would definitely need to be vacuumed when this was all over. Finally opening her eyes, she watched as the two boys were placed in the back of one of the police cars.

The sudden shock of reality crushed her, as she hobbled to the door. Turning to the hostile officer, she cried out, "Don't you understand. He was going to kill us! I would never hurt my boys." Wringing her hands together, Anita suddenly realized the insanity of what she had admitted to. He had died at her hands. Her fingerprints were on the gun and the

knife. There were no witnesses. Now even in death, he was torturing her.

With handcuffs in place, the officer's poisonous words assailed her. "You have the right..." the officer started as the cramps finally overwhelmed her and the blackness enveloped her aching body. Feeling the warm sidewalk below her, she felt the life of her unborn child slowly seep out of her body. Overcoming the peaceful darkness, Anita felt as if she were flying. Startled, she peered into the bland faces of the EMTs rolling her into the ambulance.

Then with a heavy sigh, she lipped a silent good-bye to her life, somehow knowing that she could never return.

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## Literary License

### Drama First Place

# SILENCING ANGELS

LESLIE RIGGINS

#### Characters

Phil	Mother	Officer 2
Katie	Father/Mr. Thompson	Judge
Tina	Officer 1	Narrator

*In a darkened room Phil finishes taping a big pink bow on the birthday present. Signing the small card, he attaches it to a pink bow, then watches how Katie's tight shorts and tank top clings to her slender body.*

**Phil:** (*Hiding the present behind his back, he steps out of the doorway just as she passes*) Wait, Sugar.

**Katie:** (*Startled*) Oh, I didn't know you were in there. I had a great birthday! Thanks for convincing my dad to let me come with you and Tina. It seems like forever since I saw Evie. I really miss her now that she lives in the country. (*Reaching over, she quickly kisses his cheek, then yawns as she turns toward the bedroom*)

**Phil:** Before you go. I found a present you didn't open yet.

**Katie:** (*Reads the card*) Oh, Uncle Phil, you're such a charmer! You didn't have to. (*She shakes the box curiously*)

**Phil:** You have to guess first. (*Impatiently waiting,*

*he takes a drink of his beer while watching her open the box*)

**Katie:** (*Holding the slinky pink nightgown up against her body, she hugs him.*) Wow! I love it! How did you know I wanted this one. I can't wait to put it on. (*Smiling she walks off. Opening the door, she turns back*) Oh, thanks again, Uncle Phil; you're such a special friend.

**Narrator:** *Phil sits, surrounded by the endless quiet, thinking about the day's festivities. Phil wonders if Katie realizes how much sexier she looks now that she is fifteen. Angrily crushing his beer can, Phil remembers earlier in the day when the boy at Katie's birthday party flirted with her. Walking back to the refrigerator, he remembers how she looked as he watched her in the rear view mirror of his car. Her clothes, damp from the unbearable heat, had clung to every curve of her delicate body. Lecherously smiling he takes a breath of the fresh desert air and lets the big-city stresses flow from his body.*

**Phil:** (*Speaking to himself*): Oh, my angel, after tonight you will know just what a special friend I am.

**Narrator:** *Listening to be sure everyone is asleep, he silently walks through the house closing all the bedroom doors, sensuously rubbing the wet beer can with his thumb.*

**Phil:** (*To himself*) Your kiss, gentle as angel wings, burns through me. I've watched you grow into a woman with the glistening fire burning in your eyes. Tonight I will teach you.

**Phil:** (*Walking into her bedroom. Startled*): What was that? (*He listens*) It must have just been the sound of too much beer in my head. Everyone is still asleep. (*Quietly sitting on Katie's bed, Phil feels desire's fire burn within him. Watching her sleep, he caringly touches her hair. With a tiny sound, Katie turns facing him. A moonbeam slipping through the curtain of the window shines on her bed. He swallows a moan as her delicate nightgown falls, revealing her breast*)

**Phil:** (*Quietly*) Your mom said you wanted this nightgown; but your dad wouldn't buy it for you. (*Touching the silky fabric*) It is so right that you wore it tonight. So many hours I looked for just the right present that would show you how I felt. (*Phil gently holds her hand on his bare chest, while very quietly unzipping his jeans. When Katie's hand tenses in apprehension, he moves quietly into the dark-*

ness. Only when he hears her deep, rhythmic breathing does he once again sit next to her, stroking his manhood with her hand)

**Katie:** (Pulls her hand back, groggy) What? Who's there? Dreams.. (Yawns) Remember... touch. Must have been nightmare? (Yawning falls asleep again) So real. (Phil feels Katie's hand once again go limp, as she falls back into sleep. Waiting until she is once again sound asleep, he places her hand on his hardened manhood, gently stroking it)

**Phil** (Gasping): Oh, your touch so gentle. So unlike the others. So pure.

**Narrator:** Startled, goose bumps prickle Katie's skin as she finally wakes again realizing what is happening. The stench of alcohol fills the silent bedroom. Confused still, Katie jerks her hand away from Phil's strong grasp, then pulls the blankets up snugly around her neck. Trembling, she wiggles away from the older man's body now silhouetted in the moonlight.

**Katie:** (Frantically whispering. Pulling the blankets up to her chin) What are you doing?

**Phil:** I came to teach you, to love you. Don't be afraid. I'll never hurt you.

**Katie:** (Quietly screaming) You're crazy! Get away from me. Your wife...

**Phil:** I'm so glad you wore the nightgown I gave you tonight. You look so beautiful in it. Don't reject my love. You told me I was your special friend.

**Katie:** (Horrorified. Clings harder to the blankets. Louder but still in a soft forceful voice) Get out, NOW!

**Narrator:** Phil walks, forlornly, out of the bedroom. Entering the kitchen he grabs another beer, and plops down on the couch. Lighting a cigarette, he

sits in the darkened living room. Meanwhile in the tiny bedroom, Katie wraps herself up like a cocoon in the blanket. Shivering, she wonders if she will ever feel warm inside again. Then walking into the dimly-lit living room, she sits in a big over-stuffed chair across from Phil. Carefully pulling her legs up under her house coat, she diligently checks that no skin is left visible to his leering eyes.

**Katie:** (Points to a bedroom down the hall) Why? Your wife ? What if she heard?

**Phil:** (His pants still unzipped, revealing) Everyone is asleep, Angel. They'll never know. I waited until the time was right. You have to understand, it is my duty to teach you what men do to little girls. You know how much I care about you.

**Katie:** No, I don't understand. How can I tell my Dad his best friend is a pervert?

**Phil:** (Zipping his pants, he walks over and crouches just in front of Katie. Touching her hand) You're right, your Dad wouldn't understand when I tell him how you, his precious angel, came after me. Maybe it would just be better if we kept this our little secret.

**Katie:** You're drunk!

**Phil:** (Tucking in his shirt, Phil looks out the window) You don't have to worry, Angel. I won't touch you again. Go to bed, now.

**Narrator:** Katie sits frozen in the chair, wondering what she should do. Her arms cramping, she continues to clutch the blanket snugly around her.

Glancing out the window, she notices the faint outline of the sun over the horizon. Fear of someone catching her alone with Phil forces her finally to move toward the bedroom; but, as she passes, Phil grabs her in a momentary embrace. Feeling her cringe, he quickly kisses her.

**Phil:** (His words slurred as he stares into her eyes) I had to teach you. Try to understand. It was my duty.

**Tina:** (Walking into the semi-lit room, Phil's wife gasps) What the hell is going on here? Phil?

## Act 2

**Narrator:** Months have passed as Katie helps her mother prepare dinner. Katie spends less and less time with her family now. Her dad started working two jobs and spends very little time with his family. Somehow since Katie's birthday, her parents are always too busy for her. Katie's parents never hear her call out in the darkness for those many months when the nightmares stole her sleep. Katie and her mother prepare dinner...

**Mother:** Don't forget to poke the potatoes before

## MultiPerspectives

Articles or Essays of controversy are one of Palabras's favourite pastimes. If you'd like to write a refutation or an alternate perspective to any article herein, the deadline is **January 30th, 2004** for the Spring 2004 issue.



you put them in the microwave. (*Silence*) Katie, did you hear me?

**Katie:** Sorry, I wasn't paying attention. What did you say?

**Mother:** (*Turning toward Katie*) Something wrong?

**Katie:** Nah, finals comin' up. Now, I'm supposed to do what with the water?

**Mother:** Sit down for a minute. I'll get us some lemonade.

**Katie:** (*Nervously*) OK, but I have a lot of homework to do still.

**Mother:** You know I got a call from one of your teachers the other day. She said your grades are dropping. She is worried about you. What's going on?

**Katie:** (*Hatefully*) Nothing, Mom. Really!

**Mother:** I'll finish dinner. You go work on your homework. (*Katie heads toward the door*) By the way, Phil invited us to come over Saturday for a barbeque. Your father is looking forward to talking to Phil about that boat.

**Katie:** (*She stops*) What boat?

**Mother:** Your father and Phil are going to buy a boat together. Then we can spend June together at Phil's cabin by the lake. You know the boat is why your father got that part-time job at Radio Shack. Uncle Phil and Tina are such fun people. It's such a shame they can't have kids of their own.

**Katie:** (*Heading toward the door again*) I can't go! I'm too busy. Why do you always make plans without asking me! I'm not a little kid anymore.

**Mother:** The past few months have been hard on all of us. I think it will do us all some good to take a day off and have some fun. Dad has already taken the time off from work. You will go. I'm sure you'll have a great time.

**Katie:** (*Leaving*) NO!

**Narrator:** *Katie spends the next week frantically trying to study for her finals. Fearful of seeing Phil again, she can't sleep, eat, or study. At school she begins binging on candy bars, cokes and doughnuts whenever the urge hits her. Each night getting sick, so unable to eat her dinner. By Friday afternoon, Katie knows she failed her finals and will have to retake Biology and Algebra in the summer. Pondering how to explain failing to her parents, Katie remembers the barbeque at Phil's house the next day. Unable to find a way to sabotage the family outing, she wallows in depression while eating a gallon of ice cream.*

*Saturday Katie wakes up and puts on her baggiest shirt and ugliest shorts, grabs her walkman, and*

*storms into the kitchen.*

**Mother:** (*Laughing as the two walk out the door to the car*) What, no make-up? Isn't it a little early to be getting ready for Halloween?

**Narrator:** *After arriving at Phil's house, the families' women lounge around on the driveway while the men talk around the barbeque grill. Sitting next to her mother, Katie laughs nervously as Tina and her mother talk. Soon unconsciously she starts laughing and talking with the ladies. Out of the corner of her eye, she continuously watches her dad and Phil stand around drinking and talking. After a while, Katie falls asleep while listening to her music. Her long legs bask in the warm sun. The adults' laughter wakes up the teen who turns and watches Phil juggle four big, red apples. When each one unceremoniously smashes on the driveway everyone laughs, even his wife, Tina, who quickly cleans the mess.*

**Tina:** You should see our backyard. Phil built a deck with a fish pond. He even has fish in it. If you ask me, I think he plans to practice casting in it. Maybe there he'll actually catch something, unlike at the lake. There he only catches a cold.

*(Stretching, Katie gets up and walks toward the backyard. Standing on the deck she becomes entranced in the golden fish swimming in the clear water, and doesn't hear the footsteps coming up behind her)*

**Phil:** (*Blocking her way back*): Like the fish?

**Katie:** (*Nervously wrapping her arms around herself steps away from Phil*) Yeah, they're OK.

**Phil:** Haven't seen you for awhile. How is school? I hear you have a new boyfriend.

**Katie:** What, are you checking up on me? I don't have a boyfriend. Just leave me alone.

**Phil:** I built this because I know how much you like the lake. Now you have a lake right here in town that you can visit any time.

**Katie:** (*Silently nods, as she feels his hand slowly creep up the side of her leg. Hearing her father's voice, she tries to turn away. Quietly*) I told you just leave me alone!

**Phil:** Oh my sweet Angel, don't be angry with me. Here, let me help you. (*Finally she pushes past and defiantly heads toward the house*)

**Katie:** I'm going to tell my Dad.

**Phil:** (*Catching up to her, Phil grabs on to her arm so she can't leave*) I'm disappointed that you would

want to tell our little secret. It would make your parents so upset to hear such lies and I would have to tell them the truth. Your father is so much happier now with all the plans about the boat. I don't think I've ever seen him so relaxed since his heart attack. I can't imagine that our little secret may stress him too badly? Surely not enough to have another heart attack. And maybe in a few years he could still get that silly boat, without my help. What do you think?

**Katie:** He won't believe you. He loves me.

**Narrator:** *Katie walks around to the front of the house, and once again sits next to her mother. Climbing into her father's car after lunch, she politely smiles and waves good-by. On the long drive home, she falls asleep as a whirlwind of thoughts torment her. Katie becomes more and more despondent as the week progresses, remaining in her room constantly.*

**Mother:** *(Touching her daughter's forehead)* You OK? You don't seem to have a fever.

**Father:** *(Coming in)* Your mother is worried sick. She says you won't eat or talk or anything. And your principal called. She said you haven't been in school all week. Where have you been? What is going on? *(Katie remains silent)*

**Father:** Katie, let me help you now. Talk to me.

**Katie:** *(Crying)* He touched me, Daddy.

**Father:** *(Angry)* What do you mean he touched you? Who?

**Katie:** On my birthday, Phil came in my room and he... *(Sobs)* Then again at the barbeque. I'm sorry. I promise, I didn't do anything. He made me promise not to tell you. *(Choking)* He... he... he said he just wanted to teach me.

**Father:** *(Storming out of the room)* I'll kill him!

**Katie:** *(In hysterics, chases after him)* Please, don't Daddy. It was my fault! I'm sorry.

**Mother:** *(Flatly)* I told you not to tell him. Now who will pay the price?

**Narrator:** *During the next week Katie and her family barely talk to each other. There is no reference made to Phil or Tina. Phil and Tina's picture that once stood on next [sic] to Katie's picture, has mysteriously disappeared. For the first time in months, Katie and her parents sit together at the dinner table. But no one says a word. There are rumors that Phil is in the hospital in a coma; but Katie is afraid to ask about him.*

*(Knock at the door)*

**Father:** I'll get it. *(When her father opens the door, Katie sees two young officers standing on the porch)*

**Father:** Yes, may I help you, Officers?

**Officer 1:** Mr. Thompson, you are under arrest for the aggravated assault and battery with a deadly weapon with the intent to commit bodily harm on the person of Phil Beaumont. Come with us, please.

**Katie:** *(In shock, she listens to the officer read her father his Miranda Rights. Then running to the police car where her father now sits proudly, she desperately tries to open the car door)* Daddy, no! Come back!

**Mother:** Katie, what have you done?

### Act 3

**Judge:** *(In the courtroom)* This has been a case where good and bad, right and wrong no longer stand clear as black and white. We have heard many testimonies about a man who was highly respected in the community, as a friend, businessman, and citizen. And we learned how his inexcusable behavior negatively impacted several young girls and their families. Mr. Thompson, I hope you do realize the full consequences of choosing to take the law into your own hands. *(Father looks back at his wife and daughter, hearing their soft cries)* I find you guilty of one count aggravated assault and battery...

**Narrator:** *Katie screams and runs hysterically out of the courthouse. Conversations fill the courtroom, as Katie's mother and a police officer run outside looking for the girl.*

**Mother:** *(Seeing Katie running into the street)* Katie, be careful! Stop! The car!

**Narrator:** *Katie turns toward her mother just as the sound of squealing brakes fill the air. Screaming, Katie's mother watches as her daughter's body is flung like a rag doll over a small car. Time seems to stand still as Katie's mom runs toward her daughter's lifeless body. Oblivious to the ruckus around her, Katie's mom sits on the cold pavement, cradling her daughter's head in her lap.*

**Mother:** *(Sobs)* No, Katie, don't leave me.

**Katie:** *(Lapsing in and out of consciousness)* Mother, I didn't mean to destroy... family... I love... you... Dad... don't let them take him. I killed him. I killed...

*Literary License*  
*Drama Second Place*

**ALL IN A DAY**

*ERIKA HALL*

**Characters:**

**Brian** – A 17-year old normal teenager bored with his day-to-day routine. He wants to get away from his mother's sheltering wings, and do something radical enough to shake up the family's uninteresting life.

**Debra** – 45. Brian's mom and Jim's wife whose days are spent doing housework. She is a little melodramatic, overprotective and unreasonable and at times blowing [sic] things way out of proportion. Her moods can switch at any given moment.

**Jim** – 46. Butcher at the local grocery. He is a relatively calm man. He brings laughter to this family with his way of seeing things.

**Sonny** – 25 years old. A Professional body piercer. He's extremely farsighted but his customers don't know this.

**Setting:**

*They live in a small town. The opening scenes are in the family home. It's a modest home that would look a lot better if the windows had glass, if the doors had knobs, if it wasn't leaning to one side because of the cracking foundation and if the roof wasn't collapsing in a few spots.*

**Brian:** Mom, can I run over to Adam's house for a little while?

**Debra:** Son [*Looking down at her pile of receipts*] did you know doing taxes is like getting two root canals, a cold sore, registering for school...

**Brian:** Mom!

**Debra:** ...filling out those financial aid forms, applying for a scholarship, and standing in the DMV all day and getting hit by a bus as you walk out the door?

**Brian:** Mom! Can I go?

**Debra:** O.K. Would you try to be back by 5:30 for dinner?

**Brian:** Mom, I'm seventeen, can I for once just come in the house and just stand in [front of] the fridge for fifteen minutes and still not know what I want?

**Debra:** No, what are you saying? Dinner is impor-

tant for a boy if you want to grow up and be big and strong. Look at that fella, Vin Diesel. I bet he eats dinner with his mom! He didn't get that way eating happy meals. Dinner is the only time we ever see you now. You don't like spending time with me and dad anymore [*sobbing*]. [*Startling revelation*] Oh, my goodness [*standing abruptly*]. Look at me young man, are you doing drugs?

**Brian:** Mom c'mon, I'm just saying that although I love you I have never loved your cooking.

[*Laughing*] What are we having anyway?

**Debra:** Brussel sprout casserole with asparagus soup.

**Brian:** [*Grimacing*] Yeah, uh, you know it's tempting, but I think I'll pass today, please. [*Giving his best suck-up smile*]

**Debra:** Okay son, but tomorrow no excuses – I am making my specialty. Tofu enchiladas with a bean sauce.

**Brian:** Yeah, alright mom. Sounds delicious. See ya later. [*Quick kiss on her forehead and dashes out the front door with a slam*]

**Debra:** [*Sighing looking at receipts, tapping forehead with index finger*] Where is that receipt from my trip to the hot springs? That trip cost me \$200 just to get in some hot water. And to think I paid to get scalded. That has to be a deduction somehow. [*Looks at watch*]

**Debra:** Jim'll be home soon. Uncle Sam will have to stand in line and wait his turn.

[*Fade*]

[*Lights come up on the kitchen, Debra's finishing dinner and phone rings*]

**Debra:** Hello?

**Brian:** Hey mom, I'm here.

**Debra:** What took you so long? He only lives two blocks away!

**Brian:** Well... uh, I had to stop for gas. [*Loud music and kids chattering in background*]

**Debra:** Gas! Why did you take the truck? You could have walked there. You know you're not supposed to drive without asking your daddy and me. Every time you take the car our insurance goes up.

**Brian:** C'mon mom, [*whispering*] you're getting loud. I don't want everybody to hear you.

**Debra:** Everybody [*talking even louder*], who in the world is everybody?

**Brian:** Nobody. Mom, quit trippin'.

**Debra:** You just make sure you keep your cell phone on and call me if you go anywhere else, boy. And make sure you get home early enough to eat something. I don't want you eating late at night; you'll get gas.

**Brian:** Okay, Mom, enough already. Later.

**Debra:** Peace.

[*Jim shows up unexpectedly in the kitchen tired from work*]

**Jim:** Hey girl, how was your day? [*forced smile*]

**Debra:** Fine, everything was just lovely. Digging out receipts for the whole year, cleaning the toilet, standing for 30 minutes at the checkout at Wal-Mart to buy one carton of orange juice because you only left a drop in there this morning, getting a ticket on Llano by some rookie cop, and getting the Qwest bill made my day just peachy.

**Jim:** Well, excuse me; I guess you're the only one with problems, right Miss Debra?

**Debra:** What!?

**Jim:** Like I didn't have any problems today, like I want you dumping all your garbage on me. I really didn't want to know how your day was. I was just being polite.

**Debra:** I have some garbage I'd like to dump on you all right. After fifteen years of being married I would hope you would at least pretend a little bit harder to care about my day.

**Jim:** Oh, come on, you know I'm not that good of an actor. Well I take that back – I should have won an Academy for the scene when I told you how pretty you were.

**Debra:** When was that?

**Jim:** Oh, uh, about [*laughing*] fifteen years ago!

**Debra** [*Not shaken by his comments*] Well, your dinner is ready. Are you ready to eat?

**Jim:** No. I ate before I left work.

**Debra:** What?!

**Jim:** [*Slowly*] I ate before I left work

**Debra:** You 're kidding [*shaking her head obviously furious*] and you didn't think to call me right, so I could have been doing other things.

**Jim:** Nope. [*Nonchalantly*] What other things would you be doing anyway? Going to Dillards and spending my money, driving to Lubbock to spend my money because you sure aren't spending my money at the beauty shop trying to save our marriage.

**Debra:** You're a jerk.

**Jim:** Really? You're a pretty brave woman talking

like that to a man who just worked twelve hours cutting up sides of beef. [*Moves hands as a butcher*] You know I still got the repetitive motion in my hands. [*Looks around the kitchen*] Where is the meat cleaver anyway?

**Debra:** What do I care about how long you worked? You don't care how long I worked cooking that dinner over there.

**Jim:** Lady, what is your problem today? I thought you went through menopause already.

**Debra:** Oh, so you want to be funny. You want to be a funny man. Jokes are us, is that right?

**Jim:** Yeah, you are one big joke. [*He starts laughing*]

**Debra:** Okay I'm done. If you want your food later on you'll find it in the garbage disposal.

**Jim:** Aw woman, that's where it should have been as soon as you finished cooking. [*She turns to leave*] Deb [*grabbing her arm*] now you know I was just playing around. Don't leave mad – just leave! [*He laughs even harder*]

**Debra:** You better let go of me before you get a pan of brussel sprouts in your face.

**Jim:** You gon' threaten me? To hit me? And with some brussel sprouts at that. All you had to do is tell me I had to eat it – that junk that would have been threat enough.

**Debra:** [*She stops, turning back frustrated*] Okay there you go again thinking this is Mad TV. Maybe if you spent more time working on your comedy routine material we would have enough money to move out of this dump.

**Jim:** What dump? Girl, this place is a gold mine. [*Gesturing*] My mama lived here, her mama lived here and before that her cousin's sister's step-daddy lived here with his mama.

**Debra:** We've been in this junk yard too long. When it rains I feel like I'm in Noah's ark. And it smells like the ark too with your nasty socks all over the place.

**Jim:** In the first place I like our house. It's different. We are not like everyone else.

**Debra:** Yeah, they have a roof.

**Jim:** We have a roof.

**Debra:** A piece of 4x4 across the top of a shack that's 20x4 does not make a roof.

**Jim:** Tomato, tomato. And, I wouldn't have stinky socks if you would wash clothes every few years.

**Debra:** I can't wash what I can't find. You have 'em stuffed wherever you find a corner. I don't want a scavenger hunt every time I need to wash.

**Jim:** You wash? [*Incredulous*] When?

**Debra:** Uhhhhh! [*Irritated*] How did we get on socks and washing anyway?

**Jim:** I don't know. Where is Brian?

**Debra:** Out – he went to Adam's

**Jim:** He took the truck, didn't he?

**Debra:** Yeah.

**Jim:** Did the police call yet?

**Debra:** No.

**Jim:** They will.

**Debra:** I know.

**Jim:** Should we call them now?

**Debra:** For what?

**Jim:** To make our statement so we can go to bed early.

**Debra:** Nothing happened yet.

**Jim:** But it will.

**Debra:** Maybe we should just put a boot on the car.

**Jim:** That won't help.

**Debra:** Yeah, if I know him he'll try to blowtorch it off and blow up the car.

**Jim:** We raised him good, though, huh?

**Debra:** Yeah, he's a good boy. He just drives like your mama.

[*Fade*]

[*Lights come up on Brian and Adam sitting in Adam's garage, twenty other teens crammed in waiting their turn with the piercer*]

**Brian:** Are you sure this is safe, man?

**Sonny:** Oh yeah, everybody I did are okay. And so that I don't mess up my perfection I use the same needle. Plus, I'm being earth conscious by recycling. Relax, man. It'll only hurt a little while.

**Brian:** H... H... How many times have you done this?

**Sonny:** I don't know numbers, man. Enough to know what to do if I mess up and hit an artery

**Brian:** What? [*Jumping up*]

**Sonny:** Just a little piercing humor. You're okay. I have a first aid kit my little sister found on her way home from school. It's a little dirty, but dirt never hurt anybody, right? And I even have an EMT friend who'll come take care of you if you pass out... for a small fee.

**Brian:** You're making me a little nervous.

**Sonny:** Does your "mommy" know you're here?

**Brian:** My "mommy" thinks I'm at my friend Adam's.

**Sonny:** Well, let's get to it. Where do you want it?

**Brian:** It? I want four.

**Sonny:** You're joking. Yeah, you are new to this. It's

alright with me. When you pass out on the first one I'll just keep going so we don't have to revive you after every stick. Okay?

**Brian:** I'll be fine. I can do this. [*Pumping himself up*] I want one in my lip, my eyelid, my tongue, and nose. You think my parents will notice?

**Sonny:** Naw, parents never notice anything. Let's get this done. [*Starts putting down a plastic drop cloth for blood, puts on his eyeglasses, goggles, and plastic smock*]

[*Fades*]

[*Lights come up back at the house*]

**Debra:** Jim! [*Hits him*]

[*Loud snoring*]

**Debra:** Jim!

**Jim:** Yeah [*clearing throat*], uh, yeah what'd you hit me for?

**Debra:** I think I hear the truck. He's home.

**Jim:** Let's go see what's broken this time. [*Running outside*]

**Jim:** Hey, son. [*Looking at truck, never at him*]

**Debra:** Check under the hood and walk around checking for dents. [*Pulling pressure gauge from pocket*] I'll check the tires.

[*Shaking his head amazed*] Son, what's broken today? Whose car did you hit? You didn't run over anybody, hit a deer...

**Brian:** Naw, nothing happened. [*Walking toward him, face black and blue from punctures*]

**Debra:** You're kidding. How in the world did you manage that?

**Brian:** I don't know mom, I guess it is just one of those freak accidents.

**Debra:** Well, it's late; let's go in the house.

**Jim:** [*Dad looks right in his face and hugs him, slaps him on the back*] I knew you would make me proud, son.

**Brian:** [*Wincing in pain, smiles*]

**Debra:** Was there something different about that boy tonight?

**Jim:** Nah! That's my boy! [*Chest stuck out*] Look, no scratches! [*pointing to truck*]

[*Spotlight Brian's scratched and scarred face*]

[*Lights fade*]

## *Literary License*

### *Drama Third Place*

# A PEACEFUL WORLD

(WARNING: THIS IS NOT A CHRISTMAS STORY)

ALEXANDRIA BACHICHA

### Scene 1- A bus Stop

*(There is a man (John) sitting on the bus stop bench.)*

*(Another man (James) comes up to John, pointing a gun at him. He is shaking.)*

*(John stands up and turns around looking extremely puzzled.)*

*(James, shaking, drops the gun down, pointing at the floor. Then he walks out of the scene.)*

*(John casually checks his watch and sit's back down on the bench.)*

### Scene 2- James's living room

*(James walks in. It is a bit dimmer to signify it is later at night.)*

*(James sits down on a chair and stares; then he shakes his head.)*

**John:** I had a good reason.

**Jamie:** *(offstage)* Come to bed it's already late.  
*(John looks to the side that the voice is coming from then slumps back in his chair.)*

### Scene 3- An Apartment

*(John is sitting somewhere in the room)*

**Jane:** *(Enters)* Good morning, John – how are you this glorious morning?

**John:** Well I've been better, but who hasn't? We live in such a great society it would be a strange thing to complain about. Compared to the past, right now everything is entirely sublime.

**Jane:** In the past there has been so much hate and chaos—

**John:** You're right. Just the other day I was walking to the bus stop and my neighbor, you know James

*(Jane nods), he pulled a gun on me.*

**Jane:** Well, what did he want?

**John:** I honestly don't know. Can you believe that? It's ludicrous!

**Jane:** I hope you've begun to plot.

**John:** Of course.

**Jane:** Good. That's why things like that don't happen too often now a' days.

**John:** I know, I was quite surprised myself to experience that, I know, the very nerve of him, but after all he broke down and just backed off.

**Jane:** He really had to have some type of nerve to even think of trying that anywhere!

**John:** Well perfection is key in our society and I am so proud.

**Jane:** Well John, it has a lot to do with us, we definitely try.

**John:** Yes, and apparently we have succeeded.

**Jane:** Many people have said that perfection is a fault, but look at this, complete bliss.

**John:** True you are.

### Scene 4- A living room

*(James is pacing and looks as if he hasn't slept)*

**James:** I have a reason, a good reason, reason, a good reason, good reason, had good reason.

**Jamie:** *(She has just awakened. Out of view)* James! How was your day? Yesterday, I didn't even see you come in.

**James:** *(Looks nervous)* - *(Loud)* I had good reason *(Lower voice)* reason, good reason, reason, good, had good reason.

**Jamie:** *(Enters in a bath-robe stretching, just woke up)* I know work's been tough for you lately, but it has been a bit difficult for everyone.

**James:** I was at the bus stop.

**Jamie:** What for? There's our perfectly good car sitting there in the parking lot.

**James:** I have good reason.

**Jamie:** Then what is it?

**James:** Well, I pulled a gun on John.

**Jamie:** We've been having ruff times, but he's our neighbor for Christ's sake. James, you're as good as dead!

**James:** I have a good reason.

**Jamie:** Spit it out! We haven't got all day. You know the rules.

**James:** He's always been too perfect to conform in our society. I wanted to be different.

**Jamie:** You know we're all different anyway *(shakes*

*head*) why would you want to do something so stupid? Look at us – *(points in direction of window)* What kind of reason is that?!

**James:** A good one... we're all the same, everyone is all the SAME!

### Scene 5- At the 1rst apartment residence

**Jane:** So have you decided how you're going to do it!

**John:** You mean the plot?

**Jane:** Yup – You have to do it today *(with a smile)*. You had better mark it in that little schedule book of yours.

**John:** *(Picks up and looks at his schedule)* Yup, it's pretty full for today, 12:00 sounds good—he'll be at home then, right.

**Jane:** I'm pretty sure he comes back to eat lunch, so he should be there.

**John:** Okay then, it's settled – I hope he hasn't left town yet.

**Jane:** As if that would be much of a problem, you know how it goes, he'll be there and, well, I don't think he'd break two rules in one week!

**John:** Well, you never know, he did attempt murder with no justification.

**Jane:** Yes, but he should already know the consequences.

**John:** *(Picks up a briefcase or business like item.*

*Smiles)* Well, I can't ever be later for work, so I'll see you this afternoon. Bye, Jane.

**Jane:** Don't work too hard *(they smile, John leaves)*

**Jane:** Where did I put that number? *(looks around)* Humph. *(Picks up a paper and the phone and presses a number)*

**Jane:** *(Waits—converses on the phone)* Yes, Hello, yes this is Jane, JA459856858, that's right, for noon today, yes, attempted murder of my husband, no he didn't, okay, that's James, JA958462, okay, thank you.

### Scene 6- James's apartment

**James:** You better just go, I'll stay here.

**Jamie:** What the hell is wrong with you! Wake up—they're plotting right now... You don't have much time, and for no damn reason, no reason at all.

**James:** I have a reason, a good reason – I JUST DO! Now leave before you get dragged into this.

**Jamie:** You've already dragged me into this, what

the hell am I supposed to do, just sit here and watch you die?

**James:** That's why I'm asking you to leave.

**Jamie:** I can't just leave, what the— What is wrong with this society? We can't just KILL people! My God they can't do it!

**James:** You'd better go.

**Jamie:** Let's both get out of here, they won't find us.

**James:** They'll find us; they find everyone.

**Jamie:** Those blood thirsty maggots!

**James:** Well right now I'm a part of them—I'll pay for it. *(Beeping in background)*

**Man's electronic voice:** You are now confined to your living space—prepare for results of plotting.

**James:** It's too late—I don't want you to see this, we'll just wait until it comes, but I don't want you to see this.

**Jamie:** *(Runs to the door and tries to pull it open)* There has to be a way out of this.

**James:** *(Calmly)* I will pay for what I did.

**Jamie:** You shouldn't have to pay for something like that. We are all different!

**James:** We all pay the same way.

**Jamie:** Why did you pull the gun on him? ...of all things attempted murder? Don't start giving me any B. S. on how you had a good reason. Just trying to be different is no good reason.

**James:** Intentions, he would never give me a reason so I made my own reason. It's already too late for any of that.

*(Jamie gets a chair and tries to break a window, an alarm goes off as you hear the window break)*

**Jamie:** Let's get out of here!

**James:** Fine then, but now YOU are going to have to pay, like we all pay.

*(They both begin to climb out the window)*

*(The door flies open and John points and shoots James, then walks out)*

**Jamie:** *(Slaps John)* Wake up, dammit wake up! *(shakes him as she sobs then looks up)* Don't worry, I'll be plotting!

### Scene 7- Restaurant

*(A waiter at a table and a few people eating around)*

**John:** Ah *(sighs)*, the satisfaction of justice. It actually felt kind of good, and since I had justification, it was that much better.

**Jane:** (*Raises her glass*) Here's to a peaceful world and to the elimination of all of those villainous creatures.

**John:** (*Raises his glass*) Here! Here!

**Jane:** You know they shouldn't call it plotting; they should just call it punishment. I mean, all you do is kill them; there's not much thought involved.

**Jamie:** (*Walks in the restaurant and shoots John, then walks out.*)

**Jane:** (*Grabs her cell phone*) This is Jane, number JA459856-858. Jamie KE589874-231, she just killed my husband. I will punish her now. You want her number? I just gave it to you: KE589874-231! (*Hangs up and runs out the door. You hear another shot and Jane comes back and bumps into a waiter while grabbing her purse—she sits down a while, in shock*)

**Waiter:** (*Types in a number on a key pad on his tray*) Jane JA459856-858 (*He takes a gun out of his apron and then shoots Jane*)

(*The waiter drops a dish and the head-waiter comes out and shoots him, the waiter falls dead.*)

#### Scene 8- A line of operators answering phones

**Operator 1:** Hello, what's your justification? No birthday gift, and what's your grandmother's number? So, that's Jesse JE845981874, thank you. You now have permission to plot and kill.

**Operator 2:** (*Stands up and pulls out a knife killing other Operators. Stands up among the dead and smiles.*) Now we have a peaceful world.

**The End**



## *Literary License* *Poetry First Place*

# RIDDLES AND WOUNDS

*NICOLE GAY*

All the love in the world  
Couldn't make you whole,  
And drowning in the tears  
That beauty, in her cruelty,  
Summoned from your soul,  
You were spent, and left to suffer,  
Forgetting the sound of your name.

I tried to hold you up,  
But I couldn't save you,

And I was forced to give you up to darkness.  
Are you lost to me, then?  
Are you beyond the reach of my touch?  
Can you hear me when I call to you,  
Or are you so far down you're gone?

I never told you that I loved you,  
That I could no more give you up  
Than I could slow my heart to a still.  
Pain is a terrible thing to be addicted to,  
And somewhere along the line,  
You overdosed.  
Which did you need more:  
The burn of the fix,  
Or the burn of the puncture?

Did you ever really need me?  
Or were you merely counting,  
Holding your breath 'til  
Something told you it was time to let go?  
The perfection of your form was wrought with scars,

And nowhere could I lay a finger  
That I didn't wound you.

You told me once that love was an illusion.  
Does it follow that happiness is relative?  
That tragedy is a state of mind?  
Is it the same with death?  
Was your pain, then, a joke

To which you'd forgotten the punchline?  
Or was it merely a riddle you simply couldn't solve  
Without the expert advice of a blade?

But in the end, it doesn't matter,  
Because no matter how hard we fight to breathe,  
We are, after all, only human,  
And our fate is written in the very nature of our  
selves:  
So much godly splendor and beauty and majesty,  
Laid to waste,  
Wrapped up tight in packages of flesh and bone  
That, in the end, can only break and bleed and die.

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*Literary License*  
*Poetry Second Place*

## HOLDING ON

*MICHELLE DUREPOS*

There are no boundaries  
To the familiar feelings we find in each other

Like the warmth  
Of an old flannel shirt, the comfort you bring to me

I watched you  
Standing there, with the youth of today

Time transcends  
You change before my eyes, a man of many years

Loving you  
With the wisdom and soul only years can give

My eyes and heart  
Of an old woman, loving you through all time,  
peace to my soul

You have since  
Closed the door, me on one side, you on the other

Sometimes I wish  
You could see my pain, feel my loss, feel yours

No one sees  
The tears, will this ever go, softly, gently away

Meant to be  
It will be, easy words to say

Some call it  
An ache, some heartbreak

Words that  
Can never give life to what's inside

My deepest parts  
Stirred, wanting something I did not know I desired

And now cannot have  
Secrets, secret desires, holding on

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*Literary License*  
*Poetry Third Place*

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FREEDOM AND BONDAGE

*BETH SMITH-GRUBBS*

Freedom society speaks of  
Is rarely seen or heard,  
Mostly because we do not have a true meaning  
So we do not say a word.

Freedom means independence and  
Freedom from obligation,  
If we really had our freedom  
Would we still be the same great nation?

If we were free we could speak and  
Not have to be shunned by the press,  
We would actually not have this bondage,  
That as "freedom" we address.

When we do not have to cower  
Before a nation that sees our way as wrong,  
Then finally this word called freedom,  
Will at last belong.