

*Cover illustration by Abby Krick*



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## *Introduction*

In the fall of 2016, students in ENGL 360, a course in editing and publishing digital texts, part of the curriculum of the B.A. English program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, took part in a literary experiment. Through a carefully orchestrated procedure of collaborative writing known as l'atelier d'écriture, or writing workshop, students studied a collection of Grimm's fairy tales and took stock of their elements.

Storytelling patterns, such as things that come in threes, and promises which, when broken, cause dire spells to be cast, became these students' stock-in-trade which they quickly applied to stories of their own. Some of their tales were written collaboratively by as many as four students at once; others are the products

of individual writers working by themselves, but inspired by the memory, by the lingering atmosphere, of collaboration. All were written, almost like magic, within the space of one week.

Of course, it wasn't quite through magic, that the tales in this book came to be, but rather through the remarkable creative energies of a class of very talented writers. Perhaps one could go so far as to say these young authors wrote under a spell of pleasure and adventure born of deep reading, love of storytelling, and the joy of working together.

And then something even more remarkable happened. Students in ART 421, an advanced drawing class also at Indiana University of Pennsylvania , joined the game. They added their talents to the mix (or should I say *potion?*), and before you could say, "Rumplestiltskin!" this illustrated collection was born.

The stories in this book are indeed fairy tales, but they are fairy tales in a contemporary vein. We hope you will enjoy reading these *Tales for Today* as much as we enjoyed making them!

# *Three Feisty Fairies*

a tale by

Nicolette Deyarmin

Claudine McKinney

Kelsey Sutter

Sequoia Van Camp

In a cherry tree in Central Park, there lived three fairies. Paulie specialized in pick-pocketing. Damian was a master of distraction. Both took all their direction from their mother, Mabel.





*Illustration by Emily Bachy*

From a young age, Paulie had been enamored with shiny objects. As a child, she'd always ask: "Why can't I have that?" For years, Mabel reiterated the same, tired answer: "It's not yours, sweetie." But, one day, Mabel had an idea —what if Paulie could have everything she wanted? Mabel allowed Paulie to go out to practice her skills every Saturday morning. Often, she caught Paulie stealing from the cherry tree. Repeatedly, she had to explain to Paulie why this was so wrong.

"Paulie, this tree is our home. Mr. Limb allows us to live here and he protects us every day!" Mabel explained. "You have to stop stealing the cherries. We want to keep Mr. Limb around, we might really need him one day!"

"I am so sorry, Mama," Paulie sobbed.

"It's okay, dear. Take yourself outside and say you are sorry to Mr. Limb" Mabel whispered, pointing to the door.

Paulie flew down and apologized to Mr. Limb, who accepted her apology with kind understanding. Then, Paulie told Mr. Limb she was going on one of her adventures. He wished her luck, and asked her to bring him back a chime for one of his branches.

It was a fruitful hunt for Paulie, and she sped back to the treehouse with a wind of satisfaction at her back.

“Mama! Mama! Mr. Limb! Damian! I got so many wonderful new things! Something for each of you!” Paulie screamed with delight.

The three were ready to receive what Paulie brought back for them from her morning of pick-pocketing. Paulie brought back a new watch for Damian, a sweet bracelet for her mama, and as requested, she brought back for Mr. Limb a beautiful chime for his bare branch. When Paulie received praise for her findings, Damian was terribly jealous and flew around Mr. Limb’s trunk to hide. Mabel

knew that her son was not happy, so she went to talk to him: “Honey, what is it?”

Damian looked up at his mother, and with a feeling of shame in his eyes, he began, “Paulie gets so much attention because she has a talent. What is my talent?”

“You are so talented. Why don’t you ask Paulie if you can go out pilfering with her?” Mabel suggested. Damian flew around and Mabel followed. “Hey Paulie!” Damian called. “Would I be able to come out and help you? I have an idea! How about I distract your victims?”

“Damian, that is a wonderful idea! I almost got caught today when I was stealing the chime for Mr. Limb. I was so scared: the man almost squished me.”

Damian was so happy he could help his sister. He knew he needed to be the best at distracting to keep up with Paulie’s quick hands. He thought long and hard and

suddenly he had an idea. See, Damian had always been fascinated by sharpening his wings. Every day, he would stand with his back against the cherry tree and rub against it for a while in such a way that the ends of his wings were as sharp as a knife. It took some training to get used to one another, but eventually Damian and Paulie became unstoppable. The key to their success lay in the process they used: while Paulie reached down to grab her chosen object, Damian fluttered his wings in the victim's eyes. Since they invented this technique, Paulie has taken an interest in technology: just last week, the dynamic-duo successfully stole five iPhone 7s. Expensive jewelry has also been catching her eye recently, which has coincided nicely with Mabel's increasing fondness for internet auctions.

Now, it happened that New York City's mice had dominated the black market for generations, and Mabel knew they were a force to be reckoned with. She feared the worst if they caught wind of her children's

criminal exploits. But, so far, she had heard nary a word from the usual sources about the mouse community. No spikes in violence, no threats. Well, Marvin the Mouse—notorious among NYC’s criminal element—had threatened to ransack the big old oak tree at the other end of the park a few days before . But, this was a typical Marvin the Mouse intimidation tactic: he probably didn’t mean it.

One day, while Paulie and Damian were out on an excursion, Mabel spied the pesky mice who had been terrorizing the fairy community for centuries. The tree bellowed out across the city, “The mice are coming! The mice are coming!”

Paulie was just about to pluck a shiny Rolex off the arm of Fetty Wap, when she heard the call of the tree: “The mice are coming! The mice are coming,” the cherry tree bellowed. The two jetted home as fast as their wings could carry them. Damian pointed to the hoards of scummy mice

converging on their homeland. The arms of the cherry tree were swinging wildly in an effort to fend off the rancid rodents. Mabel was on the balcony, swatting at the mice who snuck past the tree's wrath.

"Get out, you filthy savages!" screamed Mabel as she tried to hide the stolen goods. Paulie desperately tried to aid her mother by picking up the mice by their tails; she threw them as far as she could.

Three mice managed to sneak past Mabel's broom. They scurried into the kitchen and went right towards the hoard. As his sister threw mice miles down the city streets through Mr. Limbs tree branches, Damian noticed that Mabel was losing control.

"I am coming, Mama!" Damian screamed. He swooped in with just enough time to stop the rodents in their tracks. His razor-sharp wings sliced their tiny retinas, blinding them in an instant - but that is a story for another day.

## *In the Back Room with Bees*

a tale by Claudine McKinney

A big hive rested in a corner of the red barn that also served as the store where Mr. and Mrs. Ulm sold their hand-made blankets. There was never a dull moment at the Ulm's store, especially when Debbie, the youngest of twelve grandchildren started working at the shop. Day in and day out, new faces and old would pass through the doors and purchase warm, colorful blankets.

"Mrs. Ulm, where do you find time to create these blankets?" yelled one customer.

"Mr. Ulm, it seems like there are new blankets to choose from every time we



come to the store,” exclaimed another,  
from the opposite end of the shop.

Debbie trotted around the store, happy as could be. She loved greeting the customers, seeing the new blankets, and even fetching blankets that were stocked high to the ceiling for customers who just wanted a peek. Most of all, Debbie’s favorite days at the shop were when Mel and her mom paid a visit. Once a month, Mel, Debbie’s best friend, and her mom came to the store to buy a new blanket; her mom had a collection of Ulm blankets. When Mel arrived, the two would hug for a while and talk about the time that had passed since they had seen one another. Then, while Mel’s mom searched for the perfect blanket (a task that normally took half an hour or more), the two girls snuck to the back room of the store. The back room looked less like a store and more like

a barn, the ceilings were high and the floor was made of planks of wood.

Once they got to their favorite spot, the girls would open their special book that hid on top of the book case that Mr. Ulm built his granddaughter when she was only two years old. Opening the big, gold backed book, the girls closed their eyes. After counting to ten, the girls held hands and spun around. Flocks of birds flew to their special spot; bunnies came from the garden, through the window, and crowded around the girls; and there was a fox. The girls named the fox Mr. Japsen. Mr. Japsen told stories to the girls, made them flower headbands, and sometime he even brought a friend with him. Mr. Japsen told them, so long as the beehive sat peacefully, everything would be right.

One day, the town of Eagleville was under an extreme weather warning—a tornado

might be coming. The wind ripped so swiftly that it damaged everything in its way. Mel and her mom arrived to the shop in time to get their monthly blanket, in the hopes of making it out before things got too ugly. When Mel and Debbie got to the back of the shop, Mel was afraid to open the book. She was afraid the animals would get hurt or they wouldn't come because of the weather. But, Debbie was afraid for another reason; she was persistent and would not take "no" for an answer. Debbie told Mel that they needed the help of Mr. Japsen, and Mel knew why. The girls opened the big, gold backed book and closed their eyes. They counted to ten and held hands, spinning around. The animals came scurrying and flying in, and Mr. Japsen ran faster than he ever had before. Instantly, Debbie pointed to the bee hive, which was hanging on by a thread. Mr. Japsen looked in fear, as the

bees around the hive began to scream in panic.

Mr. Japsen motioned for the birds to assist the bees, but nothing would stop the wind.



*Illustration by Bethany Elliott*

“Ladies, do you have a ladder?” asked Mr. Japsen.

“Inside the store, but Grandpa is using it to retrieve a blanket for Mr. Lenny,” answered Debbie. “We need it!” the fox barked.

Debbie ran into the shop and asked her Grandpa if he needed help.

“No, sweet Debbie. I’ve got it. We are spoiled with you here to help us, but back in the day this was my favorite job,” Grandpa said, reminiscing.

Debbie stood, impatiently waiting for her Grandpa to reach the tippy top and gave him just enough time to step down off the ladder before swiping it from his hands and running to the back of the store. She posted it against the red barn and held her best friend’s hand. The Queen Bee came out from the hive and sat on Debbie’s nose.

“Debbie, we will miss you. We will miss the barn that has been our home for so long,” the bee buzzed. Mel reassured her. “No, Mrs. Honey. You are not going anywhere. Mr. Japsen is on the case, you watch!” The bunnies formed a circle around the bottom of the hive as the girls stood facing one another, recalling the story Mr. Japsen told them about the hive.

“Mr. Japsen said the hive cannot touch the ground. So, the bunnies will save it if it falls. We need to help them. How can we help our friends, they cannot do this alone,” Debbie asked her friend.

“A blanket. An Ulm blanket always does the trick,” Mel enthusiastically called.

Before Debbie could pounce, Mel ran into the store and grabbed the first blanket

she could see. She ripped it from the table and ran quickly to her friend. She looked far out while she ran and could see the tornado approaching. Mr. Ulm was on the side of the store, boarding the doors.

“We need to hurry!” Mel screamed as she threw the blanket to Mr. Japsen. He caught it with his tail and roped it around the hive.

“Our home, Mr. Japsen. You saved our home!” explained Mrs. Honey.

“Mr. Japsen, what would have happened if you hadn’t save the hive?” Mel asked.

“The hive has been here since your grandparents built the shop. The hive represents your friendship, which will last forever—as this hive will forever exist on the side of the barn. Your grandparents put the book here and knew the two of you



would become friends. You need to always stick together, no matter how far life takes you!" Japsen explained to the girls.

"Mel, we are going to be friends forever," Debbie said as the girls spun around, held hands, and counted to ten. They both closed their eyes and Mel flipped the golden book closed until the next month when they would open it again.

## *Leo the Little Giant*

a tale by Kelsey Sutter

Once upon a time in a land far, far away, lived a giant by the name of Leo. Now, Leo was no ordinary giant, in fact, he was the smallest of all the giants in the land. But Leo had a special secret that only his parents knew: Leo could fly. He did not have wings like the birds or the fairies that lived in his land, no, he just jumped into the air and away he flew.

You see, when Leo was just a tiny giant he had come across some magical asparagus. Though Leo thought asparagus was revolting, he brought it home anyhow so that his mother could cook it up for supper. There was something odd about this particular asparagus—it was blue instead of green

and had a funny smell, but nonetheless he had taken it home.

Leo's mother cooked it up for supper and Leo ate every last bite! That night while Leo was sleeping, a strange sensation came over him; his legs started to shake, his arms started to bulge, his torso began to writhe; and suddenly a sharp pain shot from the tips of his toes to the top of his head, like lightning striking a tree. Leo shot straight up in bed, completely aware of all of his senses and leapt to his feet. He stood at his open window where the enormous, full moon was staring back at him. He wondered what had just happened.

"Was it just a dream?" he thought quietly to himself, as his fingertips tingled with electricity. It was obvious to Leo that he was not going back to sleep anytime soon,

so he decided to go for a walk in the dead of the night.

As he shut the door to his house (slowly, so as to not wake his mother) an elk crossed his path. Leo wailed so loud and was startled so suddenly that he jumped into the air and covered his face! Now the funny thing is, Leo was much bigger than the elk. The elk could've been a toy in his large hands, but he was indeed the smallest giant, and that made him a little skittish. When Leo peeked through his fingers to see if the critter was gone, he noticed that he was floating just above the sidewalk! "AHHHH!!" he screamed as he realized some kind of spell had been cast on him by a witch.

"But wait," he thought to himself, "the only explanation would be the asparagus. It HAD to be magical."

Leo took into account his newly found power and decided to take it for a spin. He pushed his arms against his sides, kicked his feet a little, and away he flew! Leo was soaring high and fast; he was brushing the tops of the trees with his fingers and gliding along the water. He was having the time of his life until he heard the smallest of cries down below.



Illustration by Bill Brown

“No, please, don’t!” the little voice shrieked.

Leo, being the kind-hearted, small giant that he was, decided he needed to help whoever was in need. He clicked his heels together and steered himself toward the sound of the cry. It wasn't long until he came across a lion cub surrounded by giants.

"Please, please! I'm just trying to get home to my mama!" the poor cub shouted, terrified. "Your mane would look great as a carpet in my entryway" said one burly giant.

"I could make lion stew!" yelled another with an apron tied around her fat waist.

Leo knew he had to help; not all giants were mean, and besides, what did the lion cub do to them? It was about time the forest and all those who inhabited it lived in peace. Leo flew down, down, down as

fast as he could, grabbing tree branches on his way. As soon as he was close enough he bopped each giant on the head as hard as he could. The three of them fell, unconscious, which left only the burliest giant of them all. Leo wasn't scared though; he knew he could take him. Leo landed in between the giant the cub.

"You listen here, you big lug!" Leo shouted, making his presence known, "You need to leave this little guy alone! What did he do to you?!"

The giant looked startled. Leo was easily seven feet shorter than he, with baby hands, and a tiny voice. The giant boomed, "Hahaha, and who might we have here?" He bent down to get a better look at Leo.



“Oh, Leo! You scoundrel. Help a bud out, and let’s off this lion so my family can eat.”

“You are not starving, and by the looks of you, you could certainly spare some food,” Leo said bluntly. “And I’ll also have you know, this is no place for bullies like you!”

The giant laughed again and Leo stood his ground, the cub cowering behind him. Before the giant knew what was coming, Leo jumped and flew into the air, swatting at him with all his might. The tree branches flew and deep cuts could be seen all over the giant’s face where Leo had made contact. Leo could see this would slow the giant down, but not stop him. As quickly as he could, he swooped down and grabbed the cub.

“You have to bite his neck!” Leo screamed as he flew the cub up to the giant, who

was still swatting away, as if being attacked by pesky birds.

“I have to whaaaa?” The lion asked in a panic.

“Just trust me!” Leo screamed. “Ready? NOW!”

The lion bit just as Leo had told him, and he bit hard. His small mouth did not seem to do much damage to the giant’s beefy neck, but after a moment blood gushed from the two perfect puncture wounds. The giant wailed and clasped his neck in pain. He fell to his knees as Leo idled in the air, still holding the lion cub.

“It’s not right that you don’t fall with your kind!” The giant screamed through rasping breaths as he slowly lost his color and his life.

Leo, ignoring the fallen giant, took a moment to gaze toward the horizon. “I will fight for those who are small,” he avowed. Then, he flew down slowly, just in case the giant wasn’t quite gone, and set the lion cub down on a rock. The lion stood staring at this magnificently ordinary giant, not much taller than his own father when he stood on his hind legs.

“Who ARE you?” The lion asked, confused.

“I’m Leo. I’m the smallest of the giants, and I don’t like bullies. What’s your name?” “Ada,” The lion stuttered, still in shock.

“Well, Ada, it seems to me like my work here is done. Can you find your way home?”

“No, well, yes, but won’t you come over for a while? My father would love to meet a friendly giant.”

“I would love nothing more!” Leo said enthusiastically.

And so the two set off into the rising sun, an odd pair, but new friends and friends for life, nonetheless.

*How the Cheetah Became the Friendliest  
of the Big Cats*

a tale by Sequoia Van Camp

It was just a normal day. Old Rudy the Rhino was trotting over to his favorite watering hole, admiring the scenery, minding his own business. Then, along came Coolio the cheetah, tearing past at a heck of a rate. He spat at Rudy as he ran by. “Typical Coolio... He’ll learn his lesson someday,” thought Rudy. “But he’s almost three years old now,” he thought. “Surely he’d have gotten over this phase by now.”

“How’s the weather down there?” Coolio chirped as he circled back toward Rudy, kicking up dust in his wake. “That doesn’t make any sense,” Rudy was quick to point out, “You’re about the same height as me.”

“Yeah, I know,” said Coolio, “but it just sounds cool and condescending and stuff.”

“Ah,” Rudy said, forbearingly. So then, my friend, tell me, where might you be going?”

Coolio replied, this time in a normal adult feline tone. “I’m off to the watering hole. I’m meeting the gang down there, and I’m running late,” and he sped off toward the horizon. Rudy shook his head in feigned disgust, but smiled.

At a bridge game with some of his friends later that day, Rudy recounted the brief conversation he’d had with Coolio. The encounter had seemed harmless, even friendly. But things were about to take a turn for the worse.

Next Sunday, as Rudy was heading back down to the watering hole for another game of bridge, he felt the ground rumble

beneath his hooves. “Must be an elephant herd nearby,” he thought. But the rumbling got more and more intense. Pretty soon, it was obvious this wasn’t a normal rumble: this was a threat. But, there was little he could do. He could stop, turn around, and look to see what was behind him or he could keep running as fast as his little stubby legs could take him and hope for the best. He’d always used the latter strategy, so he kept pounding onward.

In no time, he was surrounded. Coolio had brought all his “buddies,” the friends he hung out with on the weekends when he went racing. “Where you goin’ old man?” asked an unfamiliar voice. He looked to the left, and realized it was Coolio. Coolio didn’t even sound like himself when he was with his friends: his voice was much deeper. “Just going down to the watering hole,” Rudy responded. One of Coolio’s

friends spat at him, then another, then another. “Hey, stop that!” he bellowed, and Coolio apologized: “I’m sorry, Rudy. We get carried away sometimes.”

“What did you just say?” one of Coolio’s friends, who went by the nickname Spotty, yelled out. “I mean, guys, we should really calm down. Old Rudy here’s never done anything to hurt us.”

“Do you want to be the next sacrifice to the poachers?” Spotty threatened.

Coolio was terrified. What had he gotten himself into? More importantly, what could he do now to get himself back into his friends’ good graces?

“Rudy, you’re a big, old, fat waste of space. Rhinos should have gone extinct already,” Coolio yelled out, then ran off. His friends



followed suit. He felt terrible, but what could he do?



*Illustration by Alex Sullivan*

After their conversation last week, Rudy had thought he and Coolio were developing a good dynamic together. He imagined they might even be friends someday. But now, Rudy was confused: had Coolio been misleading him last week, and he'd hated him all along? Why did he hate him?

All next week, Rudy felt terrible. He spent his days going over the encounter in his mind, wondering where all the insults came from. He began to feel very sad about his life. He must've done all sorts of things wrong for all the local cheetahs to detest him so. By the time next Sunday came around, Rudy considered not even going to the watering hole. Dejectedly, he decided to walk in that direction and see how he felt about it once he got out of the house. And, sure enough, he felt much better when he was out among the beautiful savannah grasses and the big blue sky, free of so much as a single cloud.

Within about a half an hour, he was trotting along merrily as ever. But, that was when he heard them again. He'd been afraid of every rumble he felt today. He dreaded what was coming.

The cheetahs yelled out all sorts of heinous insults as they tore past, then they circled around again and yelled even more insults going the other direction. Finally, Coolio did the unthinkable: he reached out his paw and tripped Rudy, the wise old hippo. Not a moment later, a truck full of park rangers roared over the hill at enormous speed, and they saw Rudy falling over. Being humans, with little grasp of the power dynamics of the animal kingdom, they immediately suspected Spotty to be the miscreant and shot him with a tranquilizer dart. Coolio never saw Spotty again.

The next morning, Coolio had some explaining to do. He went to Rudy's old country home and knocked on the door. "Man, I hope he's okay," he thought, "the guy's a living legend."

Thankfully, Rudy, eventually, opened the door. He had a bandage on his left arm, but otherwise he was fine. “Come on in, my boy,” he offered. Coolio almost felt bad entering his house, given how much he’d tormented him. But, he went in anyway.

Then he told him everything: “Look, I just wanted to tell you I am very sorry for what I have done. I’m the one who tripped you.” He glanced at Rudy’s cast.

“It’s okay, my boy” Coolio responded calmly. “But, I gave you that cast!” Coolio could not understand why Rudy was being so calm. Rudy continued: “We’ve all made our mistakes, my son. I hope you’ve learned from yours.”

“Oh, yes, Rudy, I sure have!” Coolio said. “I was so accustomed to giving everybody a hard time with my friends that I didn’t even know what to do when they started

harassing you. I didn't want to, but I didn't know what else to do."

"Well, you have to be the one to stand up and confront them," Rudy said matter-of-factly.

"But, I don't think they'd listen to me," grumbled Coolio.

Rudy continued: "Somebody has to stand up for the poor animals being bullied by your more short-sighted friends."

"You're right," Coolio finally uttered after a long pause.

Later that day, Coolio went over to his friends' favorite hangout spot and told them everything. Some of them laughed at him and left, but most stayed and agreed to stop harassing everyone in the animal kingdom. And that's how, from

that day forward, the cheetahs became  
the friendliest of all the Big Cats.

## *Stolen Sunshine*

a tale by

Ciarra Irwin

Jessica Marie Labuski

Taiya Parham

Cody W. Pattison

At the end of a cul de sac, there was a blue-brick house. Each night there was one window in which light continued to shine from within until the sun began to rise. This was the room of little Cora, whose fear of the dark was so great that she could only sleep with a lamp at her bedside. Each night her parents checked for monsters in her closet and under her bed. But it wasn't what might lurk in the murkiness that scared her. Rather, it was the void itself. The poor girl could not fathom how others could move through an

empty room with no light, or go outside with only the glow of the moon and some dimly lit stars to guide them. The darkness was the unknown; it seemed unkind and threatening.

As long as she had a light in her room, Cora felt safe. But one night, a ghastly storm began to rage outside. As she sat in her room, unbothered by the storm because of the protection of her lamp, she heard a terrible crack resound through the sky. In a moment, her light was gone. Desperately, she tried to turn it back on, but it would not go on. She ran to the light switch for her bedroom, but the result was no better. Cora began to cry, alone in the darkness she hated so much, while her parents slept. She called out for some guidance but all she heard was silence.

Looking up from her tears, she could see the light from the moon shining through



her window. As it was the only source of light, Cora ran to the window and looked up at the white moon in the sky. She fixed her eyes on it but continued to cry. Suddenly, she heard a deep, loud voice.

“Why do you weep, child?” asked the mysterious voice.

“Who said that?” she asked to the sky.

“It is I, the Moon,” came the voice. “Why do you weep?”

“Dear Moon, I fear the dark and the night so much, and now I have no source of light except for your small glow.”

“It is the Sun’s job to shine brightly, not mine,” said the Moon. “If it is the darkness that you fear, perhaps you need the power of the light in your own hands.”

Then you may create the light you desire at any time. Would you like that?"

"Oh yes," Cora exclaimed. "Yes, I would!"

"You must know, though, that I am giving you this light from my friend, the Sun. She may be upset with you if you take so much of her power for too long, for her days will not be as bright. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, yes, just please give me the light!" she begged.

"So be it," said the Moon. "The power of the light is in your hands."

Cora felt a warmth in the palms of her hands. She rubbed them together and then drew them apart. When she did, a brilliant, yellow glow formed in the air between her hands. She laughed and

spread her hands farther apart to create a more luminous glow. The rest of the night she sat in her room, basking in the glow of the light she created. That night she slept soundly, knowing that the light around her was of her own power. Before she began to dream, she thought, "I shall never give this light back."



*Illustration by Deanna Ansaldo*

When morning came, the Sun did not  
stream through her window as it usually

did. It was not dark outside, but it was not shiny either. There was not a single cloud in the sky, but still, it was less bright than usual. The day continued this way, a greyish color instead of the normal light. Inside, Cora enjoyed the bright glow she created.

The next day, as she played in her room, Cora heard a voice from outside her window.

“Cora, please come speak with me,” the voice said invitingly.

Cora opened her window and looked up to the grey sky.

“Who is there?” she called out.

“It is I, the Sun.”

“Sweet Sun, I can hardly see you.”

“That is because I cannot shine my light onto the Earth like I am supposed to. You have most of my power. And I would like it back.”

Cora crossed her arms, “I cannot give it back to you. If I do, I may be stuck in the darkness again some day and will not have any light to protect me.”

The Sun replied, “But if you keep my sunshine, there will not be enough light for the rest of the world.” “But I am the most afraid. I will not give you back my sunshine power.” With that, Cora closed her window and went back to her games.

For days, the Sun continued to call to her, wishing for her light to be returned. But Cora refused to listen. She enjoyed the warmth and glow of the light radiating at her fingertips. She was unafraid.

One day, though, Cora decided to ride her bike down the street. But after being outside for just a few minutes, she began to shiver. It was May and usually perfect weather for outside-play. She donned a jacket and proceeded with her ride. As she pedaled down her street, she couldn't help but notice that the flowers that normally should have been blooming around her neighbors' mailboxes were now discolored, wilting, and sad. The friendly old woman, who usually waved to Cora and invited her in for cookies, sat on her porch with a blanket and seemed not to even notice little Cora riding by. She, like the flowers, looked sad and solemn, too.

When Cora got home, she thought about what she saw.

“Perhaps they do indeed need the Sun's light more than me,” she thought.

So that night in her room, she waved her hands around and created a beautiful yellow circle of light. As the clock ticked, she slowly dimmed the light. She waved her hands over the circle to decrease the glow, and she condensed it, decreasing its diameter by squeezing her hands against it.

Soon she was left with just a small fistful of light. She crawled into her bed and let it float in front of her for a minute. Then, bravely, she squeezed the ball of light into her fist and it vanished. She looked at her darkened room and realized she did not feel afraid. She had taken away the light on her own, and the obscurity was now peaceful.

She ran to her window and called for the Moon.



“Dear Moon, please speak to me again.”

“Yes, Cora?” the Moon replied.

“I wish to give you back the light you gave me from the Sun. I do not need it anymore.”

“And why is that?”

“I am not afraid of the dark anymore. And the world needs the Sun.”

The Moon laughed heartily and said, “Sweet child, do you see? Even without the gift of the light, you had the power to conquer your fear all along. The true glow you give comes from the light inside your heart.” Cora smiled and placed her small hands against the window pane. She felt the warmth leave them and saw no more light in her fingers. She returned to her bed and looked again at the darkness

around her. She felt the light in her heart and was at peace. That night she slept soundly, knowing that the light around her was of her own power and that, as long as she lived, it would never fade.

## *Evergreen*

a tale by Ciara Irwin

It was Hazel's first autumn. She was now tall and strong, her branches extended to great widths around her. Though her trunk was thinner than the other trees', it supported her and its roots dug into the earth to anchor her when the winds and storms pushed against her. She was proud of her growth and could not wait to join the other trees in their Fall transformations.



*Illustration  
by Emily  
Alwine*

Now, Hazel was settled across the road from the others. She only had some nearby bushes and shrubs for company. She would call to the others across the way, but they would ignore her and whisper to one another so that she could not hear.

“It is because they do not know me,” Hazel would tell herself. “But once we all begin to transform in this beautiful season, they will see that I am one of them and they will wish to befriend me.” As the days passed, some of the trees began to change. Instead of the green of Summer, they turned to beautiful hues of orange, yellow, and red.

Each day, Hazel could hear them complimenting one another on their gorgeous colorations. More and more of the trees began to be filled with vibrant colors, and the people walking by would admire the warm tones.

Everyone was changing and becoming more beautiful. Everyone, except for Hazel. Each day she would awaken, hoping to see the oranges and yellows cascading over her branches. But all she continued to see was the same dark green. She watched the others, now all fully transformed and delighted in their colorful, collective beauty. She heard them giggling to each other as they looked at her, still shrouded in her deep green. She was deeply saddened, and tried to avert looking at them.

One day, however, Hazel heard a commotion. She looked across the road and saw the other trees were in a panic.

Their leaves had been falling to the ground, being stepped on and crunched by passersby, then swept away into giant piles. At first, they had enjoyed seeing children jump into the piles of their leaves and giggle and play. But now, Hazel could see, they were worried.

Over time, the trees lost more and more of their leaves. Their warm tones turned dark and brown. Their branches became bare. They shivered and complained to one another about the cold.

Across the street, Hazel felt warm. She was grateful for her full, abundant branches, packed in closely to protect her from the winds that grew colder each day. One morning she awoke, feeling heavier. She noticed that white, fluffy flakes were falling from the sky and accumulating on the ground. She noticed, with great delight, that the pure white looked rather lovely against her deep green. She looked

up at the other trees and noticed how miserable they looked. They looked sick, bare, and cold. The white continued to fall and Hazel felt more and more beautiful.

One night, she was approached by a group of people. They looked up at her and walked around to examine her branches. She tried to stand tall and confident.

“Yes, this one will be perfect,” one of the people said.

“Yes, the town will love it,” agreed another. “Let’s fix her up tomorrow afternoon.”

Hazel felt proud, but she didn’t know why. The people left, and she waited all night for their return. She was anxious to see what they would do with her.

As the sun projected its warm light the next day, the people came back. This time,

they brought boxes and bags and a ladder. Hazel's curiosity was at its peak when they began to unpack everything they brought.

They opened box after box of shining, colorful bulbs. As they unloaded them, they adorned her branches with the glittering ornaments. A woman laced a soft, red ribbon around her trunk. Hazel watched as the people adorned her with such lovely little things, making her glitter and shine. She could see the trees across the road staring at the scene unfolding before them.

"Now look who is covered in colors," she thought.

A few men wrapped a string around and around her, weaving from her bottom branches all the way to the top. She wasn't quite sure the purpose, but still felt proud of the adornment. At last, one of the



people climbed the ladder to reach the narrowest point of her trunk and branches. With great care, he placed a golden star at the top. He then somehow connected it to the strings throughout her branches.

Once he climbed down, the people stood together and admired her. Hazel was filled with pride. None of the other trees were given colorful bulbs and ribbons. No one was looking at them like the way the people were looking at her now.

By that time, the sun had retreated to the early bedtime it kept during the cold season. People of the town had begun to gather around her. Many of them had children with them who gaped at Hazel in awe. But just when she thought it couldn't get any better, a man took hold of the string wrapped around her. She heard a click, and in an instant the strings woven through her branches became little lights!

They twinkled all different bright colors.  
But the best, oh the best, was the star. It  
gleamed brilliantly at the top and  
illuminated the faces in the crowd  
gathered before her.

The children cheered and everyone was  
smiling or whistling at her! “What a  
beaut!” someone declared.

A few of the children began to sing a  
cheerful song, and their parents joined in.  
Soon, she was surrounded by lights and  
music. Over the sound, she could make  
out the scoffs and envy of the other trees.  
But she did not listen. This was her time  
to be beautiful.

And so she was. Every night people would  
pass her and admire the lights and the  
ornaments and the white fluff resting  
perfectly over it all. She stood tall and  
strong, and the colors, against her deep  
green, were perfect.

## *Timeout Mountain*

a tale by Cody W. Pattison

There once was a vagabond boy who traveled through valleys and climbed flat cliffs where waterfalls roared. The boy's name was Mungo and he had black curly hair and weather beaten clothes. Mungo roamed from town to town trading baskets he weaved in the forests where he would sleep at night. Mungo roamed around and tried to find his home or any reminder of it. Mungo suffered from amnesia, for when, at an early age, he began hitchhiking, he fell down a hillside and forgot mostly everything.

One night, when Mungo was sitting near his makeshift fire under the pines, he began looking at the stars. In one hand Mungo gripped a large stick. In the other

he held a knife. Mungo would whittle the stick so he could sell it at the next town as a beautifully carved walking stick.

“Gosh, I wish I could remember where I came from.” Mungo said, gazing at the stars.

“Gosh, I wish someone could help me find my home, but I can’t remember anything.” Mungo sighed. A blue-bird, sleeping on a branch nearby heard Mungo repeating these sentences over and over. The blue-bird awoke and started to become intrigued by Mungo and wondered why he was lost. The blue-bird contemplated what to do and kept listening until Mungo’s mumblings became snoring.

Mungo awoke the next morning, stamped out the charcoal fire, and walked off into the next town. He bartered with a cook in the town with the walking stick and used it to get some beef stew. Mungo sat on a

stump near the cook's restaurant and ate his stew until he noticed a blue-bird chirping at him on a fence post.

"Chirp, chirp, chirp." the blue-bird went on and on.

"What do you want, friend?" Mungo said curiously.

The bluebird flew around Mungo's head in circles, continuing to chirp, and went off down a trail. Mungo, still eating at the last of his stew, instinctively followed the blue-bird along the trail.

At a fork in the road, the blue-bird sat on a sign on the left trail and began chirping more. The sign read "Timeout Mountain". The bird flew deeper down the trail. Darkness took over until a light shone near a large lake. Sitting across from the lake was a huge mountain with a smoke signal coming from the top.



*Illustration by Emily Roy*

“Oh boy! Someone is at the top of that, an adventurer nonetheless!” Mungo exclaimed.

The blue-bird sat on a floating tree-limb in the shallow area of the lake. Mungo rushed after, beginning to swim toward the mountain. In the center of the lake bobbed a message in a bottle, floating along. Mungo grabbed it and kept swimming towards the other shore until he arrived. His polka-dot shirt and ripped casual khakis were soaked, and he sat in the hot grass to dry himself. The cork flew off and mungo read the message in the green colored bottle.

It read: You may be able to find all the answers you seek. Just give yourself a “timeout” and think about it.

Mungo rushed towards the mountain as his blue-bird friend began chirping near it.

“The man at the top might know what to make of all this and maybe he can help me find my home,” Mungo said rubbing his chin looking up the tall mountainside.

Mungo climbed the rest of the day away and was still not near the summit. He began to tire and was slipping. Mungo then found a cave carved out in the mountainside. There he rested. The next day Mungo awoke to the blue-bird and the smell of another fire at the top of the mountain. He climbed with only his fingers, wedging them in cracks to climb vertically.

As Mungo got to the summit he wiped the sweat from his brow and found a man with his back turned and a fire blazing, a teapot held from a spit stick.

“Mr. Blue-bird sent you didn’t he?” the mysterious voice said.



“Yeah, I wanted to know some ans—”  
Mungo began.

“Answers.” The man cut Mungo off,  
almost on instinct.

“Yeah...how did you know?” Mungo asked.

“Mr. Blue-bird always wants to help  
people, so he brings them to me,” the  
mysterious voice said.

The man turned around with all buckskin  
leather clothes, a coon cap, long white  
beard, and blue eyes. He grinned with a  
wicked smile and reached into a satchel to  
pull out a long pipe made from a deer’s  
antler. He puffed and puffed. Then he  
stopped and looked at Mungo.

“What is it you seek now, boy?” the sage-  
looking man asked.

“I want to know where my home is. I was  
out walking one day and woke upon a

hillside curious as to where I was,” Mungo explained. “I even forgot my name at one point.”

“Well,” sighed the sage. “This is peculiar, but I can help you to the best of my ability.”

Mungo looked over at a stack of books the sage had nearby and other trinkets while the man began puffing out of the deer antler again.

“My boy, you are content with your life right now, aren’t you?” the sage questioned.

Mungo looked around quizzically and then noticed the blue bird circling above his head still chirping a tune before turning back to the sage for his answer.

“Yes, but—”

The sage quickly raised his hand stopping Mungo's response. His fingernails were long and his ring finger was tucked under his thumb to make some kind of hand signal.

“Well then stay content, your home is where you can be free,” said the sage, cutting Mungo off. “I saw you travel the lake and venture the mountain and I can surely bet the world is all of our homes. I was lost like you, but now I am here learning, always.”

Mungo remembered the bottle. He decided to take a ‘timeout’ of his own and sat across from the sage. Mungo never remembered where his home was, but now that no longer seemed to matter. The sage became a mentor on the mountainside and eventually, a father-figure.

When the sage passed away, mungo fled  
timeout mountain to find a new home. He  
traversed a taller mountain and sat there  
waiting, for someone like himself, to teach  
them the value of freedom and respect for  
the will of adventure.

## *The Necklace*

a tale by Jessica Labuski

Shy was her nickname and it suited her well. She was never very outspoken, always kept to herself. When she was younger her father used to read to her every night before bed, until one night he wasn't there when she hopped into bed after brushing her teeth. She called for him, quietly, but there was no answer, so she got up and walked down the hall. When she got to the top of the stairs the doorbell rang.

Her mother answered the door, two police officers stood there. As Shy stood there, still quietly so Mom wouldn't hear her, she eavesdropped on the conversation.

“Are you Sadie LaBell?”

“Yes officer, what’s wrong?”

They replied, “we are sorry to inform you but your husband Mark was involved in an accident and passed away.”

Her mom fell to her knees. The police officers tried to catch her and one handed her something. As her mother shut the door, Shy ran down the stairs.

“Mommy, Mommy, where’s Daddy?”

Her mother answered in sobs, “He’s in a better place now.” Shy questioned, “how can he be in a better place away from us?”

As her mom tried to explain to her, she handed her the necklace, and said “your daddy would want you to have this. He will always be with you.”

She handed her the golden chain that usually hung from his neck.



*Illustration by Emily Bensinger*

She took the necklace and, as they sobbed together, her mother walked her back upstairs to bed. Tomorrow, her mother would have a long day ahead of her, but they needed to rest.

Since this day Shy struggled to fall asleep; she would lay the necklace down on the jewelry table and toss through the night. Then, one late winter evening, when the

room was cold and she was wide awake, she saw the light from the moon peering in, and suddenly she heard her father's voice.

“Shy, put on the necklace, it will give you special powers.” But where was he? She glanced at the necklace that was shining in the moonlight, could it be? Her necklace was talking? She quickly placed the necklace around her neck and there he was! Was this possible?

In her hands, she held the power to see her father, and hear his voice. Each night she used this ability to help her sleep. Shy did this for the next few years.

One night, however, Shy woke up frantically reaching for her neck, the necklace was gone... she jumped up crying, “How did I fall asleep without hearing my father's voice? Where did my necklace go?”



As she sat there in awe, the moonlight shined through her bedroom window. Faintly she heard a voice, “I see you sleep without the necklace and the voice of your father.”

Shy replied, “I DID, BUT HOW?” “It’s impossible, I’ve used that necklace to hear my father's voice to fall asleep for so long.”

The voice replied, “Sweetie you’ve had your father's voice in heart, you’ve never needed that necklace.” “He’s always been right inside your heart.”

Shy got up and put the necklace safely in the jewelry box, placed her head on her pillow and imagined her father’s voice telling her a story.

## *The Adventures of a Paper and Jam*

a tale by Taiya Parham

There was a girl who kept making excuses for why her work was not getting done, claiming if she didn't watch this movie, or if she didn't keep getting distracted by her friend Tamera then she would have her work done and not be falling behind.

“In this paper do I put the date that it's due or do I put the date that its getting done?”

“It doesn't really matter because as long as it's getting done then the teacher does not care; you could put a future date on the paper and teacher will still accept the paper and grade it accordingly. Now get back to work,” said Tamera.

The two friends got back to doing their own work for 10 minutes when Janice's

phone started to light, indicating she had a incoming message. Tamara kept working not letting it phase her.

“Oh my God my boyfriend just doesn't get it. I keep telling him I'm busy but he continues to message me. Tamara I don't feel like he pays attention to me anymore, like what does he expect me to do?”

“Maybe you should actually finish your work and then message him back you already told him the reason, so why not go through with it. You are basically telling him you're not doing your work like you say you are by messaging him back. In high school, you said you separated your social life from your school life and were only social after all your work was done. So why is this any different? He should understand why you aren't texting him back right away.”

Tamara got back to working on her paper that she had to write for one of many English major classes. Meanwhile, Janice picked her phone back up and started

texting again. It took two more times of being told to do her homework before she got back to work.

“I feel like the teacher already went over this stuff in class. Like, didn't he go over what archaeologists do in one of his lectures?” Tamara didn't answer. Instead she chose to keep writing. “Didn't he already go over that archaeologists look at the teeth and try to uncover when they died?” Tamara glanced at her and nodded her head for a brief moment. Then she continued with her own assignment. But Janice just didn't feel satisfied. “I mean if he already went over this in class I feel like he would read this and say so you weren't paying attention in class. You know what I mean? Should I just delete it?” Janice waited for a reply.

With a hint of frustration in her voice Tamara answered, “All the teacher said to do was look through the website and then write your reaction on it using the questions he gave as guidelines. He also gave this assignment before he started to

talk about any of that stuff, so like I said before, just write the paper and then ask questions later. You can make the corrections and changes after it's done. It's not worth it to make changes before the paper is done."

It was now 1 o'clock am when Janice took notice that they had been working for 30 minutes straight with no interruptions. She was actually feeling really proud about this accomplishment until she turned to her left to find that Tamara, who was supposed to be sitting there, was, in fact, not. "You've got to be kidding me," Janice said while rolling her eyes. She struggled to get up from the awkward position she was in for over an hour and walked towards the noise coming from the kitchen. As she got closer, she tried to make out what was rummaging through her pantry. To her it looked like a troll, but as she moved closer she started to make out some of the features. Suddenly,

it jumped out at her with strawberry jam all over its face.

“Hiyah! I'm Jamaica, but my friends call me Jam.” If Janice looked hard enough she realized the troll thing looked like a little girl with bright neon yellow hair that stuck up in every direction. She had freckles all over her face and her eyes were the same color as the jam she was eating with her hands. “Aren't you going to ask me why I'm here?”



*Illustration by Kyle Foor*

Janice stood there like a statue with confusion written all of her face. “Uh . . .”

“Go on. I’ll wait. This jam is just so good by the way! Your world is great! I wish I could stand here forever and eat all the Jam I want! But while I’m at it I can answer some questions. Any, and I mean

any questions you may have about anything. Did I mention any?"

"Who are you and what are you doing in my house?!" Janice all but screamed.

"Well, I answered this earlier, but I am Jamaica but my friends, if I had any. Call me Jam. I am from your mind created to teach you a little lesson about hard work and staying focused. You ready?" Jam quirked an eyebrow in question but still kept eating the jam. Janice's *favorite* jam.

"Can you stop! I won't have any left and will have to wait a month till I can get some more! You know money is hard to come by these days."

Taking the rest of the jar and throwing her head back, Jam finished it off. "Too late."

"Where is Tamara? What did you do to her?" Janice picked up a pan and held it up like a baseball bat.



Jam looked at her with what looked like sympathy and just threw the jar behind her, not caring that the last drops of jam scattered all over Janice's expensive new white carpet that she received as a gift. "Look I'm sorry to tell you this, but your friend won't be coming back until you finish the paper you started but never finished. And with a little bit of focus you will get the results you want." So Janice got to work with the help of Jam and just like what was promised, Tamara came back when the paper was finally done.

"Jam, we did it!"

"Who are you talking to Janice? And why is the living room and kitchen a mess? I go to the bathroom for second and you go crazy?" Janice got up and ran towards Tamara and pulled her into a tight hug. "I thought I would never see you again!"

Tamara looked at her like she was crazy but said, "Finish your paper."

"Already done!"

Tamara looked surprised but then said,  
“Well, then I should go to the bathroom  
more often.”

# *A Tale of Bloomfield*

a tale by

Josh Kaib

Alexis Kopylcheck

Vincent Smarra

Once upon a time, in the small Italian village of Bloomfield, on the eastern side of Pittsburgh, there lived a young hipster named Timothy. Since the age of two, however, Timothy had rejected this name due to its unoriginality. He was beyond tired of common names, as well as common remarks. Utterly disgusted with Timothy, he was having no more. Timothy now thought of himself as Rainstorm.

Sleeping soundly in his bed, Rainstorm had been awakened that morning, not by the sounds of lovely chirping birds, nor the brightness of the sunshine through the window. No. Roughly around 11:30 A.M., it was not the birds, but rather the

voices and howling of his ultra-conservative roommates' cursing the filled the air and shook him awake. What were they so intrigued over, you might ask? Could it have been a Gary Johnson commercial?



*Illustration by Anthony Pipetti*

Let's take a moment to discuss these roommates, just for a clearer understanding. Rainstorm had two. First, there was Henry. Henry was the type of

roommate that no soul wanted to endure. Henry was the type of man who made you fear his presence. He was constantly threatening to break Rainstorm's possessions—his favorite electronic cigarette, for example. And those were only a few of his flaws. Jared, the second roommate, often seen as the dastardly and diabolically clever one, would torture Rainstorm with cutting remarks about how he couldn't possibly be original. Living with these roommates, Rainstorm was forced to walk on eggshells when they were around.

Rainstorm's biggest wish, though, was to be able to pay off his current living situation. He wanted nothing more than to be free of this terrible predicament. He wanted to get out of this so-called shadow and explore new things with people just a tad more modern. He wanted to see what it was like to venture out into the world with people who were a bit more down to earth.

Feeling trapped and isolated in his bedroom, Rainstorm would open every window. He loved this feeling. Birds would be singing, and he could feel the glorious sunshine on his face. He smiled in this moment of relaxation, and took advantage of every second. Even though he felt alone in the world, when he could escape in this way, even just for a moment, he could feel okay.

One day, Rainstorm put on his favorite pair of lime green overalls and curled his moustache just the way he liked before heading out for a nice lukewarm craft beer to start off the day. “Where do you think you’re going, Tim?” asked Henry, as Rainstorm came down the stairs and into the living room.

“I’m just gonna go get a Double bock cherry and chocolate stout from Hip Hops, my favorite bar off Liberty Avenue. I guarantee you’ve never he—”

Henry quickly grabbed Rainstorm and shoved him against the wall, He stuck a stiff finger right into his moustache.

“You haven’t paid the rent in two months! We’re sick of covering for you. Your time is up Tim!” Henry said with fire in his eyes.

“If I can’t afford my creatine because I’m always covering your share of the rent, then I’m taking something from you!” Henry reached into Rainstorm’s pocket and grabbed his most valuable possession; his electronic, super modded, vaporizing E-cigarette.

“NO! DON’T!” Rainstorm pleaded as he struggled to break free from Henry’s robot-like grip. Henry Laughed maniacally as he held the cherished possession in front of Rainstorm’s face. Then he threw the vape out of the living room window and onto Liberty Avenue, where surely it would not be found.

“NO!” cried Rainstorm, falling to his knees.

Then he heard the unmistakable hissing laughter of Jared, who climbed over the back of the couch. Jared was sporting a bright red hat with an American Flag shining brightly on the front.

“Check his pockets Henry, my dear!” hissed Jared. “We will have to get our rent money the old fashion way, tsssssss.”

“Absolutely, said Henry in a deep tone.

Henry reached into the sobbing Rainstorm’s back pocket, searching for cash. He stopped when he found two paper objects.

“Well, what do we have here?” Henry said, as he pulled two Cage the Elephant tickets from Rainstorm’s back pocket.

“You have money for tickets, huh? But you have no money for a roof over your



head?” hissed Jared. “Destroy them, Henry!”

“Of course, Jared.”

They both laughed hysterically as they ripped apart the two tickets to paradise. Now what? What was he going to do? He thought, and thought, and thought.

“You know, what am I doing?” he thought to himself. “I do not want to live this way any more. He pondered further: I do not need other people to be successful. I can do that on my own. It’s time to make changes. It’s time to get a job.” Rainstorm, a job? Really? Could he do it? Could this be the start to a new beginning?

Beginning to fill out applications, Rainstorm was puzzled. What was he good at? Where could he even apply? The thought of where to apply, that alone bothered him for days. Employment options nearby were limited. They included the traditional Starbucks, a bicycle shop where he spent some of his

time, and a bookstore. He filled out application after application. No more than a week later, he received a phone call. He had been hired at Starbucks!

A month into his job, Rainstorm met a coworker named Elizabeth. Fascinated by the young woman, he asked her to a protest for pit bulls. (Aside from his passion for electronic cigarettes and music, Rainstorm also had a passion for adorable puppies.) As she shared the same passion, Elizabeth agreed. They hit it off right away.

During the protest, they both decided to take a break with their electronic cigarettes. Ten minutes wasn't much, but it gave them the stress relief they needed. Heading back, Rainstorm did not realize that his messenger bag has a huge hole in the bottom, nor did he notice as \$100 in tip money fell out of the bag and onto the ground.

Suddenly, he heard a clock striking midnight. Scared he wouldn't make it

home on time, Rainstorm rushed away from Elizabeth's side. Home again, and overjoyed by the thought of his freedom, Rainstorm eagerly handed over the money that was still in his bag—\$100 less than his debt.

An hour later, the doorbell rang. It was Elizabeth. "What could she be doing here?" he wondered. She had come, it seemed, to return his hundred-dollar bill.

"Only a woman in love would do such a thing," he thought. "This is the woman for me."

"Beautiful Elizabeth, would you forever be my princess?" he asked in shyness. "It would honestly mean the world!"

She laughed a bit awkwardly. "Why do you think I came back?"



*Illustration by Crystal Mendez*

Again overjoyed, he handed the money, long overdue, to his rude and terrible roommates. He was free at last! In that moment, Elizabeth looked at him and said, “My Rainstorm, I no longer find it necessary that you call me Elizabeth. That name no longer suits me. Call me Rainbow.”

From that moment on, with their relationship amazing, they lived happily ever after.

## ***Even Fairy Godmothers Deserve to Sparkle***

a tale by Alexis Kopylcheck

Fairy Godmother Debbie had just returned from her visit with Cinderella. See, this is what she does. She helps a princess find her worth, makes her sparkle, and continues on with her night. Debbie loves it; and it's something that she really enjoys, almost making up for the fact that she doesn't feel pretty herself. "Well, at least I can bring happiness to others," she says to herself.

Out of habit, Debbie made a cup of tea to help her relax. Tonight, though, the delicious tea did the complete opposite. She went to bed as usual, but she woke up screaming and terrified.

"I love what I do," she cried. I just wish I could do more things for myself!" Another habit she had was that when she felt

upset, she often would cry out, “Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo!”

So that’s what she did in that moment.  
“Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo!”



*Illustration by Kristen Reda*

And then she said, to no one but herself,  
“You know what, there’s a parade this  
weekend! I’m going to go, have fun, and



hopefully get noticed!" It was a great idea, but would she be able to pull it off?

Liking her horse and carriage, she decided to take it for a spin. Spending some time outdoors, she thought, might get her mind in gear. On the ride, she thought, and she thought, and she thought. "What would put me back in the spotlight? What am I good at?"

Then it hit her. Before the fairy-godmother business, Debbie had been a dancer. "That's it," she exclaimed. "I'll dance!"

She practiced a typical jazz piece for what seemed like an eternity; however, she was clearly getting somewhere. Now all Debbie needed was an accompanist. She couldn't possibly take her own horse and carriage—that would be a cliché. She grabbed the phone book. As she dialed, you could see her face light up with excitement. For the first time in a long time, she gave a real smile.

But nobody responded to her request! For a moment, she was devastated, and she moped. But then she realized she could just as easily attend the parade by herself. And off she went, skipping away.

The parade was held in a tiny town named Ross. After introducing herself to her “audience”, Debbie stepped up on stage, which was happened to be located in the center of the activity. As she began, she felt more than ready. However, her outfit was not. She had purchased the wrong size shoe!

Feeling confident nonetheless, she continued on with her dance.



*Illustration by Riley Stensland*

Sure enough, not even a minute into her routine, the shoe flew off and into the

crowd. Not thinking anything of it, however, she continued on with the steps, finishing the dance. About an hour later, with the clock striking midnight, she realized that it was her time to go. The shoe was left behind.

Actually, she didn't notice the missing shoes until a full two weeks later. Where was her shoe? Where could it be?

"Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo!"

With the event going on until close to three in the morning, people were still around. It was rare for a parade to go on this long any other day, but this was a celebration: "The Celebration of Love and Lights" to be exact.

With everybody else gone from the scene, one man lingered. His name was Trevor. Having a few drinks a few hours before, he should not have been by himself. However, he proceeded anyway and made his way right past where Debbie's "audience" was standing.

Walking rather unstably, Trevor tripped and fell to the ground. You might think to blame his fall on his consumption of alcohol, but actually, it was a shoe that tripped him. It was Debbie's one-size-too-big shoe. "This looks like new," he exclaimed. There has to be an owner. I must find her and return this immediately."

Since Ross was such a little town, he decided that his best bet would be to go door-to-door, and since the pair of shoes were the newest thing out, everybody wanted a pair. Debbie's neighbor even said she would "die for them". In fact, there was something of a competition. Girls were lying, fib after fib; luckily they were very poor liars, and Trevor never believed anything they said.

He knew how he would get the correct answer and find his queen. See, Debbie had removed the original laces from her shoes and had replaced them with laces of golden yellow. He knew if she could simply answer the question, "what color

are the laces?”, he would have his queen and she would have her shoes. As he made his rounds, Trevor heard people answer every color name in the book; no one even came close.

Nearly giving up hope in spite of his faith, he decided to make one last stop. Knocking on Debbie’s door, he decided to get help finding the owner of these beautiful shoes. “Excuse me Miss, a young woman left these in the middle of town, would you happen to know to whom they belong?”

Debbie’s voice rang with excitement. “My shoe! That’s my shoe! How in the world can I ever repay you? The gold laces must’ve fallen out, those are indeed my lost shoes. Thank you so much!”

Trevor was dumbfounded.

“I never in a million years thought that you would be the queen of these shoes. And now, with your permission, I’d love to

be your king. Beautiful lady, please be my queen.”

Shortly after, they jumped into the horse and carriage and rode off to dinner, somewhere fancy to discuss things, and they all lived happily ever after.

## *A Golden Nest*

a tale by Josh Kaib

There once was a young woman with golden blonde hair. Every day, she would sit by the window and brush her long, shining locks. She combed until her beautiful tresses lay softly upon her back, between her shoulder blades.

Also each day, a family of bluebirds would wait by the window for her to begin brushing. Then the birds would steal stray strands of her luscious golden locks , as they fell from her brush. The birds would then bring the strands back to their nest so that they might build the most beautiful, shining perch in all of the forest.

Unaware of their thievery, the young woman had often marveled at the



punctuality of the fast flying bluebirds, and would wonder why they would pass by her window every morning. However, she was enchanted by them and looked on them fondly as a welcome part of her morning routine. Greeting them each morning, she felt herself to be close with nature.

One day, as the sun began to rise, the family of bluebirds began to feel dissatisfied with the size of their nest. Though the golden accents placed against the cherry branches made it exquisitely beautiful, they were not satisfied with its dimensions. The birds, as they would ascend high into the trees, would look at the size of the Crow's nest, and that of the eagle even higher on the mountains. They grew envious. Though their nest was gilded and excellently crafted, they just did not think it was big enough anymore.

That same day, the young woman awoke even earlier than normal to brush her hair in morning sun and greet her tiny blue guests. She could feel the sun's rays gleaming off of her shining locks

The bluebirds were swollen with avarice. They swooped by the window, faster than they ever had before. Only half of their number had appeared, the rest having flown into the forest to fetch cherry branches and grapevines. Their nest had to become larger!

By the time the day was over the bluebirds' nest had increased to twice its original size. And yet, the bluebirds were still unhappy. Unable to drift off to sleep, they flew back to the young woman's window. As it was an early June night, the window was open; the birds welcomed themselves in. They began to snip whole locks of the girl's hair with beaks as sharp and fine as scissors. They made multiple

trips back and forth, forging, by the end of  
the night, a nest that would have  
comfortably housed a bald eagle.



*Illustration by Brittany Ritenour*

The next morning, the young woman  
awoke to find herself completely bald.

Through her tears, she swiftly wrapped a towel around her head and looked out her window, scanning the grounds for some trace of an intruder. From her window, she saw locks of her hair that had fallen from the bluebirds' greedy beaks.

She ran to her father and revealed to him what had happened. In a fit of rage, he retrieved an axe from the toolshed and the two went to follow the trail of hair and branches. Soon, they arrived at the end of the trail; revealing a tree branch over-encumbered by the weight of the most beautiful birds' nest they had ever seen.

Her father quickly chopped down the thin oak tree, letting the gorgeous nest drop to the ground. The bluebirds, exhausted, had slept through the it all. The young woman, astounded to see that the birds she once thought of as friends to be the culprits behind her new hairstyle, demanded revenge. She conked each of

them on the head firmly with the end of the axe, and carried them home.

When she arrived to her home, she began to make a pie crust. She stuffed each one of the unconscious birds, feathers and all, into the crust and latticed the top of the pie with exquisite care, the legs of the birds slightly protruding from spaces between the strips. She then baked the pie, full of the live birds, in the oven.

Hearing the ding of the timer, she pulled the pastry from the hot oven, and set it on the very window sill at which she had sat every morning and, like an amputee nursing a phantom limb, began to brush her bald scalp.

## *Rumpelstiltskin the Forger*

a tale by Vincent Smarra

“I need gold.” Miller said. He’d spent his time in college becoming the King of the campus; freshman year had been, thanks to rounds made from party to party with his book-bag always filled with beer, the same one he’d been knighted; sophomore year he’d gotten his own land, off campus, on which he hosted gatherings that were met with approval and sometimes attended by the already instilled royalty; his third year brought close personal relationships with them and their followers that swelled to thousands on special occasions, still hundreds on any random Wednesday; that left this year, his last, as one to truly relax and enjoy the fruits of his labor, fruits he’d spent countless hours and brain-cells to

cultivate. And enjoy himself he had, not particularly more so than any other year, however, which left him, in the last two weeks of his last semester, a problem; there was work to be done.

The mental state, pining for a hedonistic end to an indulgent (in the worst ways) career, was what caused him to mutter about “needing gold”, although no one was around to hear it, not out of a need to convince himself but because the word ‘gold’ reminded him of money.

But it wasn’t literal currency he needed; because he was rich in diversions as has already been mentioned, he did not go to class a lot, that of which he found himself in need was, instead, a final assignment for his capstone course, proof that the work required by the University to get a degree had had a lasting, evident and positive impact on him. Miller was bothered by the deadline so



inconsiderately placed on top of one of his own, an obviously important personal marker for every college student; so much so that he had spent the entirety of yesterday trying to come up with what he thought they wanted. He had failed and now needed help.

It'd been three arduous minutes since he'd sent an S.O.S through text to everyone he'd recently communicated with and he was angry that people had the nerve to not answer him immediately after everything he'd done for them, an indignation dispelled the moment the first reply arrived with a chime and another followed, resetting the noise before it finished.

Those that bothered to ask for more information he informed it was a final project; he ignored the instant offers of help at a price from the people too dull to realize he wasn't about to trust the fate of

his degree to anyone even remotely similar to himself. His answer scared people away leaving Miller with only five replies; three were apologies for not being able to help, one said that they did know a person but didn't want said individual mad at them, and the last was from the same number, explaining that they'd give the contact information but Miller could, under no circumstances, reveal where he'd gotten it from; the message itself was severely misspelled as if typed and sent in a terrified hurry. He typed "PROMISE" just like that, so it was clear he meant it and soon was reading a message that only had the letters 'rumpelstiltskin@gmail.com'. It was familiar to him for some reason that he didn't care to distinguish because he'd already wasted too much of his time on what he felt, deep in his heart, should have been nothing more than a triviality. Another message came in from his friend;

Miller didn't bother to read past the preview that popped up in the top of the screen. "Just be sure 2..."

Miller took a picture of the rubric on his phone then forwarded it to the address he'd received, under it the words "Willing to pay". A reply appeared almost instantly, agreeing with the bonus of the terms being ironed out later.

He shut off his phone, smiling because the thoughts of the bar were now occupying the space he'd just been using to worry about his degree.

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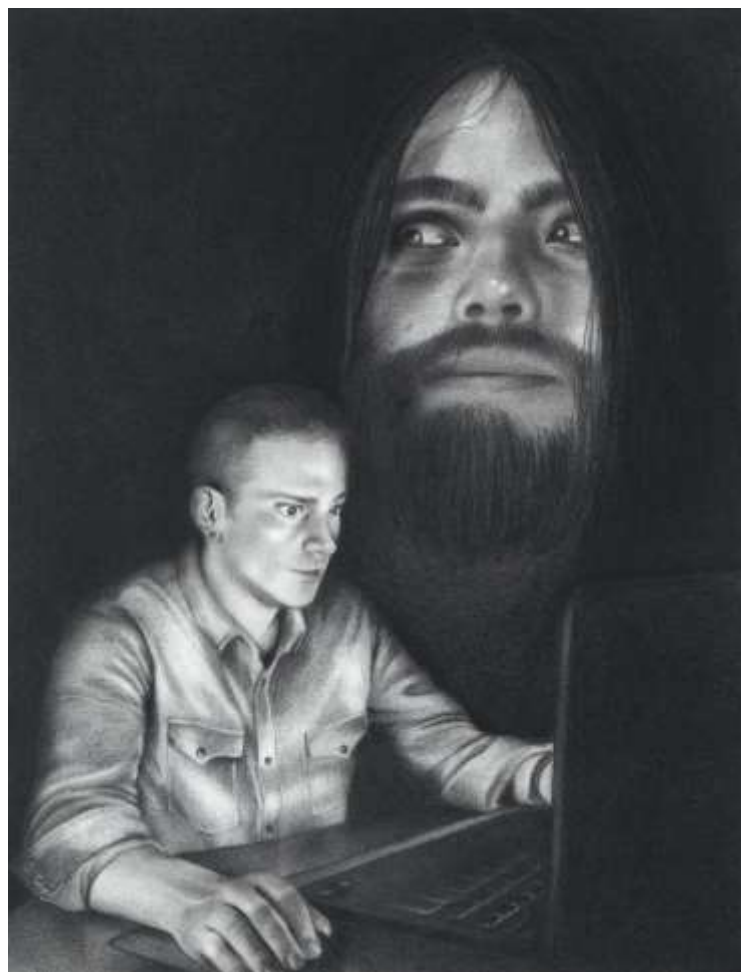
It wasn't as if Miller's head had not routinely been filled with enough crazy ideas of his own, ideas he'd held off on, magical hypotheticals dreamt up under the influence that almost always ended with him being deeper than the point he'd

started, to last double the time he had life, not to mention the will (and complete disregard for personal safety) to try and fit them all in anyways. Being unburdened had allowed Miller to bring his hypotheticals to reality at a pace he previously thought impossible; he wished he could have majored in revelry because then his final project would have been easy to do and something to behold rather than the simple recurring problem it had become. All it did was waste his time.

Earlier he'd accidentally clicked on his unread email notifications and had found numerous messages from Rumpelstiltskin demanding a meeting to discuss the arrangement; Miller had grudgingly replied 'OK,' and was sick when the response appeared immediately with a location and time only ten minutes from then. Miller was sitting in the student hub where half the campus came to eat on

a daily basis, at a table in the far back, situated underneath a window from which sunlight poured like fresh squeezed orange juice from a pitcher, pulp-free like his mind was, thinking about anything that wasn't a gritty reality of life that gets lodged between teeth and demands attention until freed, when the chair opposite him slid out, causing Miller to sigh and after a few moments, open his eyes.

To Miller, Rumpelstiltskin was nothing more than a mess of letters, he thought the name nonsense but appropriate for the disheveled and hunched over man staring silently from behind black and greasy hair that formed a curtain when stopped and swished like a hula skirt otherwise. "This is more work than I've ever done for anyone."



*Illustration by Mary Beth Barber*

Miller had to consciously try not to cringe, though the whining tone atop a nasally voice was exactly what he'd expected; he was sure if this guy had any friends it was because he didn't talk much. "I'll pay, I already said that." He'd caught the eye of someone he knew at a nearby table and held up a finger to let them know he'd be there shortly.

"Actually I've already made more than enough money this year." Another person equally familiar with Miller had walked by and engaged him in a short conversation. "You know we've met before," Rumpelstiltskin said, once they were alone again.

Miller had unconsciously pulled out his phone; he looked up from the screen. "What was that? No, I think I'd remember."

“It’s true, one class and some parties over the years. There were two just this week.” Rumpelstiltskin sat up straight.

“Maybe you just don’t look like the type my friends are, and that’s where my trouble comes from,” Miller said in reference to the awful haircut and large clothes that had no chance of being grown into. “No offense,” he added, again scrolling through his phone.

Rumpel stood up, and Miller did, too, albeit after a long and dramatic stretch that was in no way necessary. “For payment you have to find out my name. Email it to me before the assignment is due.” “That’s all?” Miller scoffed, “Didn’t you say I know it already?” No answer. “You gotta deal.” Rumpelstiltskin offered his hand to shake, but Miller didn’t see and walked past him; he’d kept his friend waiting long enough.



“This degree is exactly like a baby to me; all I had to do was pump in my presence and out it’s gonna pop. The only difference is that women are miserable for nine months whereas University is a bitch for four years.” Both Miller and his friend that’d put him into contact with Rumpelstiltskin laughed; the guy sold weed and had agreed to part with 3.5 grams for thirty if Miller smoked it all at that moment. Miller had of course agreed and the friend had of course matched with equal weight and they were in the middle of smoking seven one-gram blunts simultaneously through a device fashioned from a cardboard tube. “I’m glad you got everything figured out. What’d he ask from you? Hit me up for a tattoo when he did a ten-page paper of mine.”

“You got ripped off.” Miller laughed again.

“It was only supposed to be a hundred, you know ten a page, but I was late on the payment and shit started to get weird. The next morning I woke up and there were little ‘R’s’ in the corner of every box on my calendar, I figured they were just doodles but then the next day I roll out of bed to brush my teeth and my toothbrush has this bright orange sticky-note wrapped around it that said, “I can do anything,” signed with the same ‘R’.

I went to him with an apology—yes after I bought a new one—and he upped the payment to the tattoo. In retrospect things could’ve been a lot worse; I only ended up shelling out sixty more than the original price, but I was ready to pay anything if it’d make the fucker stop.” Miller’s heart dropped into his stomach, and not just because the weed was gone. “My assignment was due today but the payment was due yesterday.”

“Shit.”

“Should I threaten him or something? I know people that would kick his ass for me, and even would do it myself if I didn’t have so much going for me.”

“I went through the same thought process; anything short of killing him ain’t gonna help. He’ll still have the capability to do what he does.”

Miller felt defeated, but only for a second before a smile spread across his face. “But what can he actually do to me?”

“How can you ignore literally the only thing I’ve said?”

“School’s over tomorrow, I move out in two days. I’ve stayed up longer than that before; I’m invincible. The assignment has already been completed and turned in—read an email from the professor this

morning saying he'd only scanned it but things looked great. Rumpel's already lost his only advantage."

"Just pay the man, Miller. He can't have asked you for that much."

"No, he didn't." Miller stood up. "All I have to do is find out his name. You don't know it do you?" Silence. "Okay, then I'm gonna go find out. Not for you, though, and definitely not for him. It's just so I don't end college looking like a scumbag who doesn't keep his word." Miller left, on his phone and walking towards somewhere he hadn't been since his orientation tour.

The only cool thing about the library to Miller was the fact that the building was air-conditioned. Upon entering, he'd immediately gone to the oldest librarian and fed her Rumpel's description. She looked completely lost. Then he went to another, who actually may have been older than the first, and the old man's eyes lit up with a sort of fatherly pride. "T.J. reads nearly every textbook for nearly every class; that boy does nothing but take advantage of the time he has here. Are you one of his friends?"

Miller walked away, without answering, to the computer lab and sat at the sole empty terminal available. As he waited for his sign-in to register, he scanned the room and the many faces able to be seen through the door, strolling through the main library with confusion. Why weren't these people celebrating the end of the

year? The idea of Finals Week was nowhere to be found in his head.

He brought up his email, typed “tj” into the text box then sent it to Rumpelstiltskin. The reply came back at once, subject line reading “Still a nickname.” There was nothing else to be read. Miller shrugged then opened a new tab that he used to navigate to a site where he used to play flash games in high-school; it’d just occurred to him to play for some reason.

Five minutes passed and the computer dinged with another email. Miller lost his life on the game then checked; it was from his professor, the man was sure it was nothing but had received a message that called the final project’s academic integrity into question, so if he would bring in a hard copy of what he submitted tomorrow and also be ready to thoroughly

discuss the project, they would be able to deal with this swiftly.

# ***Tinderella***

a tale by

Mary Cooper

Josh Kuzmyak

Alyssa Long

Tyler Scheffler

There were once a boy and a girl. They were freshly minted high school graduates who had already planned out their fairytale wedding and imagined decorating their house with a picket fence. Summer was blissful and full of love. Then fall came around and the boy received a text message. The chat went as follows:

Girl: “So what kind of future do you see for us . . . ?”

Boy: “What? You know. I’ll be a novelist and you’ll be a biochemist and we’ll have a



house with a white picket fence and 2.5 kids lol”

Girl: “Peter, can you take this seriously? What kind of job security do you expect to have with a degree in Creative Writing?”

Boy: “Babe, what are you saying?”

Girl: “Get your life together, or it’s over.”

Stunned, the boy sat back and thought about his career path. Was it really so foolish to pursue his dream of becoming a novelist? No, he had to stay true to himself.

Still dazed, he went to his World Politics 101 class. He sat next to a gaggle of frat boys in the back of the room. They were visibly hung over on a Wednesday and going on about a new dating app.

“Man, can’t believe I matched with this 6. I’m a solid 7.5, at least!”

“At least you didn’t accidentally swipe left on Hot Britney. Someone, punch me in the gut.”

“We should probably not drunk Tinder again, dudes.”

Tinder? Peter was intrigued. He got out his phone and went to the app store. A simple red flame against a white background stared at him from the top of the page. He clicked ‘install.’

Girl after girl after girl! Hundreds of profiles overwhelmed him. He clicked on one, and a girl’s smiling face popped up. “Jessica, 23. Actually 16. Looking for some fun!’ What kind of fun?” he wondered.

Afraid, he swiped left to reject her. “Taylor, 20.”

He thought, this was strange, as her profile picture was her with another guy. He clicked to open her bio, and cringed.

“Looking for a threesome?” No thanks.” He swiped left.

“Ella, 18. English major. This is my first time on Tinder. Not looking for a hookup. Message me!”

Her blonde hair was pulled into a soft ponytail. Her green eyes sparkled. On her shoulder, she had a beautiful tattoo of glass ballet slippers. She was perfect. Honest, single, and a writer to boot!

And then, tragedy struck. Being new to the Tinder scene, the boy made a grave error and swiped left by accident, inadvertently and irrevocably rejecting his dream girl. A string of profanities flew from his mouth. The frat boys looked at him and laughed, but the professor didn't.

She kicked him out of class. “Foul language has no place in politics, young man.” Disgruntled, he went to the campus coffee-shop to mull over his loss. He sipped his caffè mocha and stared out the window. “What a day,” he sighed.

People were beginning to fill the sidewalks as class let out. And then, he saw a familiar tattoo—of glass ballet slippers. He jumped up from the table, almost spilling the rest of his coffee. The barista gave him a strange look as he ran out, narrowly missing a group of sorority girls.

Her blonde ponytail swung back and forth with the bounce in her step as she headed toward a residence hall. Peter struggled to keep her in his sights as college students bustled around him. He pushed past a group of theater kids singing loudly in the quad. One of them threw out his arms on a high note and smacked Peter on the

nose, knocking him back into someone else. He looked up into the face of an ROTC kid. “Hey, buddy, do you mind?” he snarled.

Peter turned back to find Ella, but she had disappeared. He swore under his breath and the ROTC kid glared at him before walking the other way.

Peter walked up to the door of the residence hall and tried to open it, but it was locked. He jiggled the handle a few times before accepting defeat. As he turned to leave, a boy with a pair of headphones around his neck walked out, holding the door open. Peter ran in, yelling a quick, “Thanks, man!” He stood in the lobby. Now what? Turning left, he walked down the first floor hallway, overwhelmed by all the doors. The third door on the right said “Ruby” and “Ella.” He knocked. A tall girl with box braids answered.

“Uh, is Ella here?” He asked. She gave him a strange look.

“That’s me. Do I know you?”

“Uh, no. Sorry, wrong person.” The girl closed the door in Peter’s face. He shook his head and kept walking. On the second floor, “Ella” lived with “Taylor”. He knocked again, hopeful. A girl with a brown bob and tortoiseshell glasses answered.

“Is Ella here?”

“Um, yeah,” the girl answered, squinting at him. “Can I help you with something?”

He shook his head. “Never mind, wrong person. Sorry.” He walked down the hallway, and the girl stared at him before shrugging and closing the door.

He arrived at the fifth floor, exhausted after climbing the stairs. The second-to-

last door on the left said “Toni and Ella”.  
He knocked, less enthusiastically this  
time. A girl with a long black braid  
answered. “Is Ella here?” he asked, trying  
to keep his hopes from rising.

“Yeah, just a second. Ella!” the girl called  
into the room. “Someone is here for you!”



*Illustration by Tyler Johnson*

A girl with a blonde ponytail, sparkling green eyes, and a tattoo of glass ballet



slippers on her shoulder walked to the door. She smiled at Peter. His mouth hung open. She raised an eyebrow and laughed. “Hi, um, I saw you on Tinder and totally screwed up and swiped left, but I thought you were really beautiful, I mean, I still think you’re beautiful, and you’re an English major, which is really cool, I am too, but I screwed up and I meant to swipe right and—” She laughed at him, showing her white teeth. Peter laughed nervously.

“Are you asking me out, or—?” She asked, leaning against the doorframe. Peter nodded. “I saw you too. I was hoping we’d match.” Ella smiled at him, her eyes sparkling.

“Do... do you want to get coffee together or something sometime?” he asked.

“I’d love to.”

And so they did.

## *Painting the Town Red*

a tale by Alyssa Long

Morgan sat at her desk, carefully applying her lipstick, a beautiful bright red that matched her dress. Soon, she would be on her way to a much-anticipated party her friends were throwing across town. She finished her makeup and stood up to look at herself in her full length mirror. She smoothed her red dress and did a little practice catwalk to test out her new heels. She looked good, and she felt good. She grabbed her purse and headed out.

The sun was beginning to set and the air was crisp with the first hints of fall. She shivered, goosebumps cropping up on her exposed arms. "I should have grabbed a jacket," she thought. She walked on, passing other people on their way to their

own parties. A group of giggling girls in flashy mini dresses stumbled past, their voices adding to the din of college town nightlife. She breathed in. It was a gorgeous night, and she loved the atmosphere of going out.

A loud call from her left-hand side broke her out of her reverie. There on the porch of a large Victorian-looking home stood a gang of frat boys, their beer cans glinting in the glow of streetlamps. “Hey, Little Red. Wanna come hang with us?” one of them asked. His eyes swam in and out of focus.

“I’m on my way somewhere else, actually. Thanks, though,” Morgan responded.

“You sure, little lady? Free drinks for someone as beautiful as you,” said another one, winking. She felt herself blush, cheeks as red as her dress.

“Just come in for a little bit, honey. Then you can go to your party,” the first one said. She hesitated. She didn’t know these people and she had heard bad things about this frat house, but she supposed it probably wouldn’t hurt to have just a few drinks and leave. She composed herself, trying to seem cool and collected. “I mean, sure. Why not?” she said.



*Illustration by Brennan Brougher*

They cheered as she ascended their front steps. The first guy spoke again, gently

guiding her into the house and through the living room. “Alright, baby, you stay here and I’ll bring you a drink. My name is Kyle, by the way.” He quickly disappeared into the other room.

Morgan stood nervously and looked around. Her body vibrated with the power of the bass from the huge subwoofer in the corner. All around her, people danced and talked loudly to each other, drinks sloshing from their red solo cups. A raucous cheer cut through the music as someone apparently made an epic shot in their game of beer pong.

Kyle came back with two cups and handed her one. “I made it special for you,” he said, winking and taking a huge swig from his own cup. “I’ll be right back.”

Morgan sipped her drink and watched him saunter off. She checked the time. It was almost 9:00. She had promised she’d

be at her friend's party by 9:30. The frat house was beginning to fill with more people and, as she didn't know anyone there, she was getting uncomfortable. She decided to finish her drink and leave. She chugged the rest of it, which wasn't hard to do; Kyle had only filled it halfway. It left a weird taste in her mouth but she ignored it. As she made her way to the door, she began to feel unwell, like she might vomit. "Shit," she thought. "I shouldn't have drank that so quickly." She asked someone where the bathroom was. Upstairs. She climbed the steep flight, her head swimming. She ran into the bathroom and collapsed onto her knees. She felt she was slipping in and out of consciousness.

"Hey, Little Red," a voice said from behind her. She turned, trying to focus as everything faded in and out to black. Her

vision was tunneling as Kyle started shutting the door behind him...

A loud knocking made her jump. She was still standing in front of the mirror, admiring her outfit. She went to the door. It was her friend, Liz, there to pick her up so they could walk to the party together. "What took you so long? I texted you saying that I was outside like fifteen minutes ago!" Liz exclaimed. "Yeah, sorry. I kind of spaced out and didn't hear my phone go off. I'm ready, just let me grab my bag," Morgan answered.

The two went out in the fading evening light. The air was crisp with the first hints of fall and the night was alive with the sounds of college town nightlife. They passed groups of people, talking, laughing, trying to make their way to parties of their own. A group of girls in flashy mini dresses stumbled past them.



They walked down the street, enjoying all the sights and sounds.

A voice called from a house to their left. A group of frat boys gawked at them. “Hey, ladies. Wanna come hang with us tonight?” one of them called out. The girls ignored them and kept walking. “C’mon, baby! Baby in the red dress, please?”

Morgan spun around. “Oh, bite me! We don’t party with sketchy dudes like you.”

“Hey, that hurts.” Another one said.

“Cry about it, scrub,” Liz yelled.

Heads held high, the two girls kept walking, ignoring the cries of the boys’ wounded egos. Their exhaustive catcalls and jeers echoed into the evening. They made it to their friend’s party and regaled everyone with their story, laughing and re-enacting the scene, hilarious

impressions included. Morgan danced with her friends, content, her red dress fanning out around her.

## *Skin as White as Snow*

a tale by Mary Cooper

A queen looked out upon her gardens in the quiet night. Dead rosebushes slept under a blanket of white snow, and the moon's soft light glittered off of the frozen landscape. She sighed, and her breath steamed the window. Running her blood-stained hand over her swollen belly, she spoke to the moon. "If my child could be white as the sparkling snow, black as the dead of night, and red as the blood on my hands, I could be content." She glanced once more at the silent moon in the inky sky and lay upon her bed to wait upon the morning light, and her appointed fate.

Before the dawn broke, her child was born. She was beautiful, with pitch-black hair, snowy white skin, and rosy lips. The

queen lived to see her baby born, but perished with the first light of the dawn. A woman was chosen to care for the newborn in her place. This woman was beautiful herself, with golden hair and pink cheeks. She took the child into her care and raised her as her own, calling her Snow White.

Snow grew stronger every day. She cared for the cows and chickens, spending hours of daylight in the barn. She wandered the woods around her home and sang with the mockingbirds. Sometimes she returned home in the night with her white skin marred with scratches, claiming to have been wrestling with the wolves. Her injuries, like magic, always healed up by the next morning. The woman found it strange that a growing girl like Snow White spent so little time in the sun. Snow was a good worker, however, so the woman never said anything.

One day, the woman was cutting back the trees in the yard when a branch swung back at her. It caught her on the neck, and her blood spilled out. She ran to the mirror in the house to stop the bleeding. Snow followed her.

The woman staunched the wound carefully, but a few drops of blood crept down her neck. As she mopped them up, something grabbed her shoulders.

“Do you need help?” Snow asked, staring at her bloody neck. The woman stared at her own reflection in the mirror, seeing only the room behind her. She stood quickly, knocking the mirror. It caught the sunlight and shone into Snow’s face. She hissed, reeling back. Snow backed into the door and cloves of dried garlic fell from the rafters. She ran out of the house and into the woods, disappearing into the darkness.

In the woods, Snow White came upon a little cottage. She found seven little beds, seven little place settings, and seven little pairs of boots inside. She checked the cottage for mirrors and upon finding none, was satisfied and fell asleep sprawled across a few of the beds.

A short time later, the inhabitants of the little house returned, seven dwarves exhausted from mining silver in the nearby caves. They found the sleeping Snow White across their beds and were enchanted by her unnatural beauty, allowing her to sleep despite their tired bodies. When she awoke, she explained to them the danger of the woman with the mirror. The dwarves agreed that as long as she would keep their house, they would keep her safe. She smiled, her ruby lips parted just enough to flash her white teeth.

The woman, intent on finding Snow and destroying her once and for all, asked her husband to help her find the girl. He was a huntsman, and insisted on tracking her down himself. He promised to bring back Snow's heart as a testament to her death. Off into the dark forest he walked, wielding a knife and a silver box. He found the little cottage tucked away in the woods, nestled in a patch of sun. He knocked on the door, and Snow opened it a crack.

"I'm not supposed to let strangers in while my friends are away," she said, eyeing him.

"Why don't you step out here, then? I'm no stranger, Snow. The day is beautiful, and the sun is warm. I know how much you love the sun," he responded, letting his hands fall open. The knife on his hip glinted in the light. Her eyes glittered from the door of the dark cottage.

“I guess I could make an exception, this time,” she said, smiling shyly. Slowly, she opened the door. The huntsman smiled back. “Won’t you come in, sir?”

The dwarves returned home to find Snow White crying into bloodstained hands. Next to her lay an unclean hunting knife and a silver box. The evil woman with the mirror had sent a terrible man to kill her.

Thankfully, she was unhurt, but in her fear she had killed him, and placed his heart in the box to assure his death. They sent the box back to the woman as a warning.

The dwarves made Snow White promise never to let anyone into the house again, to ensure that the evil woman wouldn’t try to hurt their beautiful maiden.

Upon receiving the silver box, the realization of whose bloody heart lay



within it nauseated the woman. She decided that the destruction of Snow rested on her shoulders. From the gnarled branches of her apple tree, she plucked the ripest, reddest apple, and pickled it whole in garlic juice. Armed with her husband's knife and the fruit, she ventured into the woods to find Snow and finish her.

The little cottage in the woods rested in the glow of twilight. In the trees, mockingbirds chattered. The woman approached the door quietly, brandishing the hunting knife. Through the window, she saw carnage. Seven little men lay sprawled around the cottage, throats torn apart. Pools of blood stained the dirt floor. Suddenly, the door swung open, and Snow stood in the darkness. Blood dripped from her ruby lips onto her white chest, and she smiled. "How good to see you," she

said, dark eyes glittering. “Please, won’t you come in?”

“I have something for you, Snow,” the woman said, holding the knife behind her. Snow raised her eyebrows and smiled wider. The woman pulled out the apple and held it out. It shone like a jewel in the dusky light. “What’s a hearty meal without something fresh for dessert?”



*Illustration by Maddy McCully*

Snow reached for the apple, her bloody  
hands a stark contrast against her pale

arms. She sank her glimmering teeth into it and took a huge bite out of the fruit. Apple juice mingled with the blood running down her chin. The pungent smell of garlic hung in the air, and Snow sputtered and choked. Her dark eyes widened as she realized what had happened. “You... you...” she spat out, before collapsing against the cottage door.

The woman hauled her body out into the grass. She broke apart the dwarves’ beds to build a crude coffin. By the time she placed Snow in the box, dawn was beginning to break. Larks chirped in the trees, watching the hasty funeral. The woman began to dig into the soft earth. The grave was nearly finished when she heard twigs snapping and hooves clopping nearby. She dropped the shovel and ran, leaving the coffin in the grass.

A handsome man stumbled upon the fresh grave. He dismounted and approached the

coffin. Inside lay a beautiful maiden with pitch-black hair, snowy white skin, and rosy lips. The man, pitying the lovely creature, bent down to kiss her red mouth. Snow White's eyes fluttered open. She smiled at the man, who fell in love with her pale beauty. He swept her out of the coffin and placed her on his horse. As they rode off into the forest, she wrapped her arms around his waist and smiled, her white fangs glinting in the morning light.

# *Hank and Greta*

a tale by Josh Kuzmyak

On a seemingly normal family camping trip, Hank and Greta got into yet another argument. This was normal for them, and their parents were at their breaking point.

Together their parents decided that when night fell they would try and lose their children on a hiking trail. They were sick of their ungrateful children and their incessant disagreements. And so, just like that they left their children in the woods.

Hank and Greta hadn't even noticed they were no longer following their parents, because they were fighting over who had used more of this month's data plan. Their parents had purposefully brought them to a service free zone for this very reason. By

the time they noticed, it was too late, and they were lost.

Greta was sure she knew which way the campsite was, but little did they both know the campsite wasn't even there anymore. Their parents were already halfway home at this point, probably listening to "Dancing Queen" by ABBA.

"Come on, it's not that much further!" Greta yelled ahead of Hank. He sighed because he was hesitant about this trek into the woods.

"Don't you think it's odd Mom and Dad are just gone?" Hank asked skeptically. "Like what if they left us? They did seem sick of us."

"I can't believe you would even think something like that!" she retorted. "This is why I am the favorite, you know."

Hank was, at this point, considering following his parents' lead and

disappearing. They had been walking in the “right direction” for the past hour now. He was no wilderness expert, but he swore they had been walking in circles.

“We need to do something to make sure we aren’t walking in circles.” Hank pleaded with Greta. “We seriously passed the same moss-covered rock six times.”

Hank then remembered that Greta kept a pack of Oreos on her at all times. Now, normally he would make fun of her for needing “comfort food” in the middle of the woods, but in this case it would save their lives. After much debate and letting her eat at least three of them, Hank started pulling the Oreos apart. Leaving the delicious creamy white center facing up, they had a decently visible trail. Finally on some sort of track, they walked deeper into the woods, but they were still hopelessly lost.



“Maybe we will run into a friendly hermit out here!” Greta offered optimistically. Hank wasn't so sure.

“That or we get murdered by inbred hillbillies in this forest where no one can hear our screams,” Hank said dryly.

Then they both saw it: smoke billowing up from the trees. They headed straight for the cloudy column that was now their only beacon of hope. What they came across made no sense. It was a gingerbread cookie shop, in July, in the middle of the woods. The chilling thing was how pristine it was, like it had been built only yesterday. All around the outside of the building were life sized gingerbread cookies, ones that looked like stubby people, their little hands interlocked like chains.

They just looked at each other, shrugged, and went inside. What else was there for them to do? The first thing they noticed was it was air conditioned. The second thing

they noticed was that no one else was there. They rang the bell at the counter for service and a little old little lady appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. She looked like she owned approximately 63 cats and like she could turn to dust at any minute.

“Welcome, welcome! You both just look so deliciously adorable don't you?” She spoke these words in a surprisingly youthful voice, at least like she was in her 40's. It was unsettling how smoothly the sentence came out of her mouth.

“We are lost.” They said in unison. “We have been in the woods for hours, and we would really appreciate if you could help us out,” Greta said, taking over the conversation. “But more importantly, I am out of Oreos because of him.” She pointed a finger at Hank.

“Well, well, isn't that just tragic,” the lady said with an unsettling smirk. “But you two are in luck, I know these woods like the

back of my hand. I'll tell you what. How about I get you something to eat, then you help me close my store and we'll get you guys out of here?"

At this point they were both so desperate that anything besides walking another foot would be better than this. So after they stuffed themselves full of cookies and milk, of course, they all proceeded to go into the back where the oven was.

"Now now, I just need one of you to go in there on your hands and knees to get the mess out of the back. You see I have very bad knees, and I can't get in there to clean any more."

Hank instantly became skeptical of the whole situation, no longer under a milky haze. Greta, on the other hand, volunteered almost immediately as she just wanted to get back into a place with wifi. The lady seemed to get more and more excited the further Greta climbed in.

Then, in a flash, the lady had shut the door and turned the oven on.

All he could hear were the screams. All he could see were the flames. The next thing that registered was the old lady cackling. "Yes, yes! I've been meaning to replace some of my decorations outside, but no one camps any more. How long it has been since I've made any new additions!"

Hank had no clue what else to do but run. He ran and ran, thankful now that his parents had forced him to stay in track. He followed the Oreos, running so fast they almost blurred together into a white line. But he wasn't paying enough attention to what was in front of him, and his face found a low hanging branch. There were stars. He didn't know if they were in the sky or just in his head. Then he passed out.



*Illustration by Abby Krick*

Hank woke up in darkness. Not the  
darkness of the not sky either; it was like

he was in a coffin. A slot opened up, big enough to allow a tray of food to be slid inside. "Hello, hello! You made it further than I thought!" He heard the voice through the opening. It was her voice. He kicked at the door, but it never gave.

The next thing he felt were the flames. The next thing he heard were his screams. Then . . . nothing.

## *Fairy Tale Madness*

a tale by Tyler Scheffler

Once there was a young man attending school in a harsh, unforgiving land known as Pennsylvania. The boy had taken up the studies of fairy tales, and had to write one for his upcoming class. Fearing he lacked creativity, he started to search for other fairy tale stories to serve as inspiration.

The house the young man had recently moved into was near the university. It had an old, dusty attic filled with books. Searching through the pile of books at 11 p.m. the night before his story was due, he stumbled upon a worn-out, leatherback book titled “Fairy Tale Madness.” Interested in the unusual looking tome, the boy made himself a cup of coffee, lit up

a cigarette and started to read. He didn't get more than three sentences in, however, before he started to feel hazy and told himself he was going to lie down for no more than three minutes.

Well, as one might assume, more than three minutes passed before he woke again. But this time, he awoke not to find himself in his attic, but rather in the middle of a forest surrounded by plants bigger than those he had ever seen. Confused and quite alarmed, he stumbled upon a path for what seemed like miles until he came across a clearing where there sat younger boy on a tree stump.





*Illustration by Angel Steinkirchner*

“Excuse me,” he ventured, “but may I ask you, where am I?”

To this the younger boy exclaimed, “Why you’re in Fairy Land! The gathering place for all fairy tale beings. Are you an outsider?”

He nodded and the younger boy said, “Well, my name’s Jack. If you wanna get outta here and go back to wherever it is you came from, you’ll have to use my three beans and climb the beanstalk waaaaay into the sky.”

Reaching into his pocket Jack pulled out a bright blue bean and handed it to him. “I have the first bean so you can have that one, but you’ll have to find the other two,” Jack explained. “The three little pigs have one, and I gave the other to Rapunzel. Both of their places are beyond that hill.” The boy looked over to a big green hill with colorful mushrooms, thanked Jack and went on his way.

“A word of caution first!” Jack shouted after him. “Lately there has been an ominous aura around here at Fairy Land. I think it’s been making the characters here act a little weird, borderline violent!”

The boy made his way to the three pigs’ houses. However, upon closer inspection he saw that they had guests: three bears, one huge and menacing, another equally as menacing but wearing a pink bow, and a smaller cub. It was easy to deduce that these were probably the three bears from the tale of “Goldilocks”, but this time they were attacking the three pigs. The houses made of straw and sticks were both knocked down, and they had surrounded the brick house.

Nonplussed by the melee, the boy saw no way to approach the pigs to get the other bean, so he waited and watched from a safe distance to see what would transpire. After about five minutes, the bigger papa

bear was able to break open a window and started to clumsily crawl inside, followed by the mama and the cub. Instantly the front door swung open and the three pigs scurried out, chased by the bears who were in hot pursuit. With the front door wide open, he quickly ran into the house to see if the bean had been left behind. Luckily, the house was no bigger than a studio apartment, with nothing in it other than broken glass and a pile of straw. Searching through the pile, he found a green bean that he placed in his pocket.

Making sure the coast was clear, he started towards Rapunzel's tower which sat in the middle of a lake not far from where he was. Upon reaching the tower, he called out "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, can you let down your hair?" to try and mimic the way the fairy tale usually went. But there was no answer, even after he shouted again and again, louder each

time. He noticed the tower was quite old looking, actually nearing the point of being structurally unsound. He entered to investigate. He climbed and climbed the stairs until he stumbled upon the body of what appeared to be a knight. Startled, he noticed the body seemed to be quite old and that the knight had died of a broken neck, probably from falling down the long flight of stairs.

Careful not to repeat the same mistake himself, he continued climbing until he reached an old, rusty door. Knocking on it just to be sure he was not heard, the boy opened the door (after much difficulty) to an unpleasant sight. Hanging before him on the chandelier of the room, was Rapunzel's decaying corpse. It appeared she had used her hair as a noose. The boy thought back to the knight's corpse. It must have been Prince Charming's body. Poor old Rapunzel probably hung herself

when she thought her prince was never going to come for her.

The boy started uncomfortably rummaging through Rapunzel's drawers, trying to find the last bean. Finally, he found it in her jewelry box, black as the night sky. Turning around to leave, he saw a terrifying sight. It was dark green, decaying ghost with long blonde hair. To his horror he realized this was probably the late princess's ghost, not laid to rest.

Having no time to run to the door he bolted to the other side of the room and kicked down a partially destroyed portion of the wall. It gave way, and he jumped into the waters below. He swam frantically toward the shore, praying the ghost was not in full pursuit of him. When he reached land he saw no sign of the specter and continued on his way making sure to put as much distance between him and the tower as possible.

At last he came to an open clearing and buried each of the beans in their own respective hole, using a leaf to water them. The boy waited for quite a while before there was a rumbling like an earthquake beneath him and three huge stalks sprouted from the earth. Colored blue, green and black, the stalks carried the boy up into the clouds and farther and farther into the atmosphere.

As he ascended, the temperature plunged and the air grew thin. The boy got dizzy as the oxygen deprivation became more intense and he passed out moments later. He awoke to find himself in the attic again, the book still in his lap, the cigarette having burned itself out, and his coffee grown cold.

With a renewed feeling of inspiration, he immediately began typing up his story of survival in the book of Fairy Land. Feeling confident about the level of

creativity and originality in the story, the boy had no anxious feelings about the assignment.

He ended up receiving a D from his professor.





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