

◇ Defenestration ◇

Volume I, Issue I

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Consider Haiku
by
Stan Lyness

Words From Our Sponsor: A Jeweler Commissions a Novel

In an arrangement believed to be a first for the book industry, Bulgari has paid British author Fay Weldon for a prominent place in her new book.

- New York Times, 2001/9/3

Morning emptiness:
an ache, a yearning, a void
until McMuffin.

Through toil and struggle
you and your Secret never
let them see you sweat.

Lunch - and life - too short
for dreary Weldon novel;
verse with Taco Bell,

refreshing dollops
of healthy meditations
with TCBY.

Struggle, sweat and strain -
calling, faxing, emailing -
sustained by Starbuck's.

The day's battles won,
floating home as on a cloud,
soothing Lexus ride.

Family awaits,
soft hugs and relaxation:
Johnny Walker straight.

The home-front news is good:
your children's Dell computers
have made them scholars.

Dinnertime brings peace,
silence formed from chewing beef -
it's what's for dinner.

Day is done at last,
woman, man and mattress joined,
Perfect Sleepers all.

Drifting off, you dream
of products yet unpurchased;
tomorrow beckons.

Here in poetry
your advertising dollar
soars on eagles' wings.

Through artful placement
viewed by millions, products flow
like ice-cold Pepsi.

Haiku sponsorship
ensures your message reaches
haiku-reading rich.

Your message rises,
drifts, as if all time had stopped
except Bulgari.

For less than one book,
ten poems purchase product
immortality.

Harried businessmen,
too rushed to read Fay's novel,
gobble verse at lunch.

While once I wondered
how to reach my customers,
haiku shows the path.

Placement deals like these
can never last forever.
Thank yourself, call now.

Delivering Quality Right To Your Door
by
Genevieve Valentine

Floyd and Angela Horowitz lived in the little house at the end of the street, with the overgrown backyard, and all the screeching.

"Floyd!" Angela was a diminutive, collapsing woman, but she could still screech like a pro. "Floyd, get down here!"

"I am!" Floyd shuffled from the kitchen to the living room. "What do you want, you horrible blight?"

"Stop using your Jeopardy word and look at this!" Angela stood with her hand on one bony hip, the other arm pointing out the window.

Floyd looked out the back window. "Is it the White's cat?"

"Do you see a cat, Floyd?"

"I don't see anything, Angela. Years of looking at you made me blind, thank God."

"Look in the back, you old turd."

"This whole thing is the back!"

"The POT!" Angela shook with fury, assisted by her osteoporosis. "You are growing the POT in our backyard!"

"I can't grow anything in that yard!"

But Angela was already sketching their future. "You are growing the pot! And the cops are going to come, and who are they going to take away? Me! And I'll spend the rest of my days in the clink!"

"You'll live a month. I wouldn't worry."

"You only wish. I'll live to bury your worthless bones." Angela headed for the kitchen. "Did you make any coffee?"

"The doc says I can't have coffee! I made tea."

"Your doc is trying to kill me." Angela opened the pantry.

She froze when the doorbell rang.

"Floyd."

"I heard it, Angela."

She snorted. "I thought you were deaf."

"Just to you. I can hear the door. Do I open it?"

"No! Are you crazy? It's the police! They're here about the pot."

Floyd paused for a moment, and then undid the latch and opened the door.

"It's a cop!" he yelled.

Angela's head appeared around the doorway to the kitchen. "I TOLD you it was the cops! Why did you open the door? Did you want me to go to the clink? Is that it?"

Floyd was spared from answering when the cop cleared his throat.

"Excuse me, I'm looking for the lady of the house. My name is Officer Chad Shuck."

Angela smoothed her hands over her tracksuit. "I'm Angela."

"Well, Angela." Shuck regarded his notepad. "It seems a complaint has been filed against you. May I come in?"

"Do you have a warrant?" Angela squinted and planted her hands on her hips.

"I'm not here to arrest anyone; I just need to ask a few questions."

"All right. Fine. But I have a grandson who's a fireman, so don't try anything funny."

The policeman cleared his throat, picked up a boom box, and stepped inside.

"I have a recording here I'd like you to listen to, ma'am. If you'd have a seat."

Angela sat in her easy chair, wringing her hands. "You don't understand, Officer," she started, "it's Floyd, he wants to see me in the electric chair."

Floyd looked at Shuck. "Coffee, Officer...?"

"No, thank you." He set down the boom box and pressed a series of buttons.

"I bet it's Sandra from down the street. Well, you can't listen to a thing she says! That woman is cheating on her husband, you mark my words! Not a day goes by that some man or other isn't at their house while he's away!"

"They're remodeling! If you ever peeled your eyes away from the window long enough to take a breath, oxygen would reach your brain and you'd figure that out!"

Officer Shuck cleared his throat. "Angela, you've committed an infraction."

"Oh, God. What?"

"A love infraction!" The first strains of "Addicted to Love" came from the boom box, and Officer Shuck pulled off his cap and tossed it into Angela's lap.

"We at the precinct hear you're a little addicted...to love!" He winked at Angela and whipped off his belt.

"Floyd?" Angela craned her neck. "Floyd, did you give the pot to the cops?"

Floyd stared, transfixed, in the doorway.

Chad slid his tie off and wrapped it seductively around Angela's shoulders.

"I don't want to have to take you down to the station," he said, aiming for seductive but having to yell a little to compete with Robert Palmer. "But it's procedure that we perform...a strip search."

"FLOYD. FLOYD you do something RIGHT NOW."

Floyd blinked as Chad's pants flew gracefully across the room and landed on the coffee table.

"Well, wait." Angela sat back. "Maybe he's not really a cop."

"Of course he's not a cop!" Floyd frowned. "Are you a cop, sir?"

Chad winked and waggled a sassy 'no' with his finger. "Now, now, sir, this one's for the lady. One love infraction from Party Messages: Delivering Quality Right To Your Door!"

He yanked his tie off and whipped it gently at Floyd, who took two steps backward.

"Sir, you need to leave now."

"Floyd, shut up and let the man finish. He has a job to do." Angela clapped softly, a little off-tempo.

"You know," said Chad as he unbuttoned his shirt, "they didn't tell me the husband-to-be would be here. Was that planned?"

"The what?" Floyd coughed. "We've been married sixty-two years."

"And this is the best thing that happened in any of them!" Angela set the policeman's cap on her head. "You just keep going, Officer Shuck."

"He's not Officer Shuck, Angela! He's a stripper!"

"And he's a very nice young man."

"I'm sorry?" Chad stopped. "Isn't this number 143?"

"Yes."

"I'm supposed to deliver a Love Infraction -"

"Please stop saying that," Floyd interrupted.

" - to the bachelorette at 143 Meadow Lane."

"This isn't Mead -"

"Floyd, you shut your hippie face! This man is here for his career!" Angela turned back to Chad. "Officer Shuck, you just go ahead and finish. You have that little pouch left still."

Chad smiled and covered his little pouch with one hand.

"Excuse me," he asked Floyd, "What is this address?"

"143 Meadow Way. Meadow Lane is two subdivisions down."

"Floyd, I'm going to make sure you rot in jail if it's the last thing I do." Angela stood up, policeman paraphernalia sliding off her lap. "Officer Shuck is the nicest policeman I've ever met!"

"He's a quack and a stripper and he's probably going to steal from you!"

"I don't have a dime to my name! He couldn't even steal coffee from me! I don't have any, because YOU are trying to KILL ME!"

"The fake cop stripper is going to kill you!"

"I can only DREAM!"

"Well, I'm very sorry to have taken up your time. There's no need to worry about the love infra - about the visit. No one's addicted to anything, of course. Have a lovely afternoon." Chad grabbed his clothes and made a mad dash to the car still naked except for a boom box and a pouch, the threats of prison still echoing in his ears.

"That's it," Angela muttered, shuffling quickly to the phone. "I am calling the police about your pot!"

"You go right ahead!" Floyd called back from the kitchen. "I'm looking for a knife so I can stab myself to death!"

"Oh, no you don't! You're going to rot in the clinker! Where's Officer Shuck? We'll get you taken away right now!"

"He's a stripper!"

"You just don't want to go to jail!"

"If it will get me away from you I will WELCOME prison!"

When the police arrived regarding the domestic disturbance, they found a policeman's hat caught in the bushes by the front door.

Letters To Wolfhaus
by
Christopher Woods

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Dear Manager, Wolfhaus Lodge,

As much as my wife and I enjoyed our annual stay this year, we couldn't help noticing that your pillows seemed unusually deflated. Esther said she was disappointed, as if our favorite hotel might be slipping a bit. I wondered if the pillows might be an omen of a downturn in the Maine economy. Nevertheless, we hope to see you again, God willing. As always, we appreciate the AARP discount.

Frank and Esther Totts

Eugene, OR

The Manager, Wolfhaus Lodge,

This is to notify you of our intention to file suit against you, your owner and the staff of Wolfhaus. Because of your hideously inadequate pillows, our necks have suffered terribly since our stay. The pain is unbearable, I tell you. In addition to calling our regular lawsuit lawyer, we have also contacted a Boston firm specializing in tourist-related injuries, maimings and deaths.

You will be very sorry.

J. S. Peters

Culver City

The Manager, Wolfhaus Lodge,

Just a cheery note to thank you for your pillows. I know they might seem inconsequential to some sleepers, but believe me when I tell you they were a godsend to my husband, Poppy. Perhaps you might recall Poppy. My husband lost his head in a tragic hunting accident several years ago and is no longer in need of pillows. Most hotels stack pillows high on the bed, and it is work for Poppy to remove them all. His vision was lost in the accident, as you might well imagine. Imagine Poppy's delight and surprise to get into bed and doze off without having to first locate the pillow, and secondly, to remove it.

Kudos to Wolfhaus. See you next year.

Dottie Graham

Eureka Springs, AR

The Manager, Wolfhaus Lodge,

Call me obsessive, but I spend a good part of my vacation cleaning and disinfecting my hotel room. Hotels simply do not prepare clean enough rooms for me. I fear bacteria of any kind, and loathe the calling cards of strangers in this regard. Pillows, as you must be aware, are sponges for disease, and are also a launching pad for the spread of same.

Philosophically, I do not believe in hotels or their pillows, but I am also a realist who enjoys travel of the healthy variety. With this in mind, I wish to commend you and Wolfhaus for having such small and insignificant pillows. Because of this, my cleaning was completed much sooner than is usual. I actually had time to take a stroll through your lovely town before time for check-out and my flight home.

Anticepta Gutierrez

Chlorox City, MN

Dear Manager, Wolfhaus Lodge,

I hope this letter goes directly to you, you wimpy smart ass with your effeminate red goatee. If so, this is for you, you damned sissy. First of all, I'd much rather take my girlfriends to a "clothing optional" retreat. But my last girlfriend, Cholie, the one I don't see anymore, begged me to take her to Wolfhaus. Nice guy that I am...

Let's cut to the chase, prickhead. I am a sexual machine, a coitus perfectionist, and my stamina is unmatched. I depend heavily on pillows to assist myself and my partners in acquiring positions which lead to absolute ecstasy. Imagine my surprise when I tried to put those pansy pillows of yours to use. My love life and my reputation in satyr circles and chatrooms have been severely maligned. Cholie won't even speak to me. She *is* telling others about my poor performance, however, as she is a spiteful bitch. Thanks a lot, buddy. For what it's worth, I've seen better pillows carved out of pimientos. I saw you eating a pimiento sandwich in the Wolfhaus office. That says it all, sissy boy.

Chip Longa

Palm Springs

Making a Statement by **Charlotte Jones**

I wanted to make a statement. That's why I hired Dominique Marceaux. I just never dreamed it would turn out like this. Why did I hire him? Because he's known for his exquisite taste and attention to detail. He knows every caterer and florist in town. I wanted my wedding to be the social event of the year, a day not only I would remember, but the entire city would remember. I guess I've gotten my wish.

I can see how you might think it was a bit lavish, but really, when you are marrying into money the way I am, the guests would have expected nothing less. The last wedding I went to topped \$200,000. Chump change, as far as I'm concerned.

We rented the entire Sofitel in Beverly Hills. Dominique's idea. He said none of our twelve hundred friends should have to drive after the event. And much to the chef's dismay, we gave him a little paid vacation for the weekend and brought in Paul Bocuse of Lyon, reputed to be the world's greatest living chef. Yes, Dominique is a bit fussy, but he is a talented wedding designer.

The guests walked into the reception area through cascades of imported Equadorian pale white roses. The fog machines and the harpist were a nice touch. Dominique wanted people to have the experience of ascending into a heavenly event. Unfortunately, the white doves flying around soiled a few of the guests.

We had the pre-wedding reception in the grand hall. A band played a musical revue of "Jazz Through the Ages." That reinforced the wedding theme of "Love Through the Ages." My fiancée and I dressed in 1800's antique wedding costumes. Dominique insisted on heavy appetizers – the curried truffle pate, scallops with fennel compote, and blini with three caviars (with individual ice sculptures for the vodka) were to die for. Dominique said that you don't want people being hungry during the ceremony, since the merest stomach growl could ruin the broadcast of the wedding on the Internet.

After an hour or so, it was time for the wedding. I changed into my retro-50's wedding gown. The 50s were such an elegant time in our history. Dominique said that everyone knows that that was the decade of the happiest marriages and the lowest divorce rate.

Dominique transformed the ballroom for the ceremony into a sanctuary. There was a waterfall, palm trees, and live peacocks that were trained to open their tails on cue when we said "I do." We had a fresh orchid on every chair, with a photograph of the two of us. This matched our wedding invitations, which we had to mail in boxes instead of envelopes due to the silk orchid on the front.

We had our website engraved on the back of the photograph, of course, so that all the guests would have a memento of the wedding and could go to the website afterwards to watch the ceremony again and again, and view the other wedding pictures. I'm sure everyone will be looking to see who was there and who wasn't. We made sure that the photographers got pictures of each and every socially prominent guest, and that the videographers captured the guests sharing their fondest memories of us.

Dominique was running around like a madman, making sure every detail was perfect. He handed out lozenges to those who might cough, and discreetly asked them to sit in the back. I do have to admit, though, that I was a little surprised when he stopped the processional right before my entrance and made the concertmaster of the L. A. Philharmonic retune his violin. Dominique said he could just not tolerate a flat violin. Personally, I couldn't hear it over the other twenty.

I suppose that the rest is my fault, really. I had wanted my sister to sing the "Ave Maria," even if she's not a professional. Dominique and I went round and round on this one. I insisted that I wanted my family to be a part of my wedding in some small way. Dominique kept insisting that weddings are not family events, they are for show. And if I wanted a family member involved, they could help carve the roast lamb. He wanted the lead from the L.A. Opera to sing. But I put my foot down, the one with the Ferragamo shoe.

I know Dominique demanded perfection, but I really didn't expect him to shoot her just because she missed that high note. True, people were cringing and I could hear the soundman saying he would have to dub that out on the Internet version, but Dominique just lost it, anyway. That's the only way to explain it and I take full responsibility. I should have listened to him. He knows what he's doing.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to get back to my guests, after I change into my futuristic wedding gown -- you know, "Love Through the Ages." I never dreamed that making a statement to the police would take so long and I'm sure my guests are getting impatient.

Situation Vacant
by
David Gwilym Anthony

My cousins have a strong religious streak -
teetotal Bible belters. I don't like
those Jesus freaks: the worst one's Pastor Mike.
To my surprise I heard from him last week.
He wrote, "You've met my helper Pete, I think:
I used to take him with me when I went
to spread the Word. The man was heaven-sent
to demonstrate the ill effects of drink.
He'd drool beside me in the Gospel Hall
and urinate, then fall about the stage;
or, turning to my flock in drunken rage,
he'd stagger forth and vilify them all.
He's passed away, the poor pathetic slob:
so how about it - would you like the job?"

The Original Ending to *Pride and Prejudice*, or, The Sopping Bride
by
Anna Psitos

"I'm snappishly funny, aren't I?" Lizzie looked at her sister Jane, who sat complacently doing her needlework.

Jane raised her head. "Well, Lizzie, I've always thought so, but what does that have to do with anything?" She smirked, knowing full well that Mr. Darcy had said just the night previous that only some women could entertain him.

Lizzie pouted. "That man is infuriating. First I'm not handsome enough to tempt him, then I'm not funny enough!" She narrowed her eyes. "I'll show him."

"Lizzy! Jane!" came their mother's shrill voice from the hall. "Come here! A new eligible bachelor has just moved into the neighborhood and I must have you meet him!" The girls grudgingly rose from the table the top of which was strewn with all manner of threads and needles. Soon they were within their mother's fussing hands, plucking their gowns ever lower and pinching their cheeks to an unnatural shade of pink. "There, you look just perfect." Mrs. Bennett rushed them back into the sitting room as horse hooves were heard on the walk outside.

A tall man, dapper in the fashions of the day swung his leg over his horse, dismounting in one swift movement. 'If he's that good with a horse, how good is he with a woman?' Lizzie thought with a smile. The pinkness of her cheek quickly turned to white as the man turned around and she beheld to see the face of her uncle, whom she had not seen in years.

"Oh, girls, look. Your uncle has come to pay a visit. How kind of him. It's a shame he had to come now, with the bachelor on his way." Mrs. Bennett's voice turned petulant and sarcastic. "Now, Thomas," she reprimanded as the man appeared in the doorway, "you know you are supposed to inform us when you are coming to visit. We're expecting a very important visitor and you'll only get in the way."

"Now, ma'am, how do you know I'm not the man you're waiting for?" A twinkle in his eyes betrayed the joke he was playing on his sister-in-law. While Mrs. Bennett spluttered, Thomas explained the situation. "I am the new bachelor in the neighborhood, sister. You just assumed it would be someone you can fix one of my lovely nieces up with."

In came two squealing girls, followed by another sister. "Uncle Thomas!!!" As the youngest of the elder Bennett family, Thomas was close in age to the next generation of Bennett sisters and had acted as an older brother to them. He proceeded to pull their hair and tweak their noses before giving them hugs. After managing to get a smile of welcome from his sister in law, Thomas went off to find his brother.

Smoothing her skirt, Mrs. Bennett attempted to find the upside in the situation. After several seconds of thought, she gave up and started complaining about unexpected visitors. "To think! The many times we have given him shelter and he doesn't have the decency to even let us know when he was planning on coming!"

"Mama, I'm sure he didn't tell us on purpose. You know how he loves to surprise you." Ever

pacific, Jane did her best to calm her mother for the next several minutes, while Lizzie thought of ways to be funny. She had thought of nothing but a mere prank by the time the cause of her distress appeared. He opened the door and had barely set foot over the threshold when a bucket of water came down upon his head. No smile.

"Darcy! I didn't know you were here!" Thomas strode out of his brother's library, ignoring the fact that his friend was soaked to the skin. "What you need is a walk about the lawn." Thomas took Darcy by the arm and whirled him around.

"...But...I was...wait!" In vain, Darcy attempted to free himself, but was propelled into the outdoors for a constitution. Lizzie watched in frustration from the house.

"Really, Lizzie, I don't know what you're waiting for. All you have to do is run after him and pretend to turn your ankle. He'll be sure to help you then." Lydia, the youngest and loosest, had snuck up on her elder sister, causing Lizzie to blush.

"But he doesn't think I'm funny!" whined the normally mature Lizzie.

"That doesn't matter as long as he can see your shelf." Lydia reached over and pulled down the top of Lizzie's dress a little more. Horrified, Lizzie tried unsuccessfully to back away before Lydia readjusted her sister's bosom. "You really need to wear your corset tighter, it's the only way to really get these things to stay perky." Lydia stepped back and contemplated her sister's figure. "I know!" Lydia dashed off and in the blink of an eye had returned with a jug of water from the wash basin.

"Hey!" Lizzie stood in the remains of the jug's contents, the empty jug in Lydia's capable hands. "What's that supposed to do? We're supposed to be proper ladies, here!"

Lydia snorted. "Being a proper lady won't get you married, sweetie. Besides, everyone is doing this. You should hear the tales Maria Lucas brought back from her trip to London. Every high class woman at the theater was drenched. It was a miracle they didn't catch their death, but never mind that." She turned Lizzie by the shoulders and pushed her out the door.

"Lizzy!" Jane's horrified voice came from the other side of the hedge. "What happened to your dress?!" Seeing Lydia still in the doorway, Jane immediately understood and stepped out from behind the bush. "Well, she does have a point. You may not realize it, but while every single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife, those willing to risk a little more have a better chance at becoming that wife." Lizzie's jaw dropped at her sister's admission. Sweet, practical Jane saying this? What was becoming of the world? "Now, if you'll excuse me, Charles is supposed to be walking by soon and I must meet him so he can save me from being trampled by a cow."

Lizzie gaped at her sister's retreating form. Her dress was significantly lower, now that she thought about it. That 'shelf' Lydia had mentioned was dangerously close to falling off its supports. Her eyes narrowed suspiciously. What was happening to everyone? It was no where near the full moon, there could be no explanation there. The flour hadn't fermented, though the last time that happened, her mother had been seeing elves for a month. While she was pondering her family's latest insanity, her uncle rounded the side of the house, Darcy still in tow.

"Lizzie! How delightful to see your...you!" Thomas nudged Darcy, who was having a little

trouble focusing on Lizzie's face. "Have you come out to enjoy the air, as well? You must join us in our foray into your pleasant little wilderness on the side of the house." She was quickly overtaken and swept up by her uncle's forward momentum.

Soon the trio found themselves in the patch of garden her mother kept promising to clear up. It was becoming a haven for all sorts of small rodents, which Lizzie heard scurrying away at their approach. "I see your mither...oh, my Scottish ancestry is coming out...your mother still hasn't made any improvements to this little area."

"No," replied Lizzie, confused by Thomas' admission of Scottish ancestry. "But I believe she's actually gotten past the planning phase and is merely waiting until the onset of fall to start planting."

"Splendid. I look forward to coming back and seeing the finished product next year. What about you, Darcy? Don't you think this area will be beautiful when it's all fixed up?" Thomas nudged Darcy, who was having difficulty locating Lizzie's face.

"Beautiful..." echoed Darcy, his eyes starting to cross from focusing too long. Thomas tripped Darcy, which woke him from his reverie. "Oh, yes, clearly. That's what I've been saying all along."

The other two decided to ignore Darcy's lack of clarity and swiftly changed the subject. "I do love summer, though. It provides ample opportunity for taking a swim in obliging lakes. Or taking baths with your clothes on."

Lizzie turned a shade similar to that of a tomato and Darcy looked archly at his friend. "I'll have you know that I was surprised when I entered a room."

"Really? And your first reaction was to jump in a lake?"

"No--"

"Oh, so you did that before you came here? Wonderful. I always say there aren't enough wet people walking around."

"Now, see here, Thomas--" Darcy pointed.

"Yes, that's a lovely example of a rose, thank you for pointing it out. I was confused what they looked like."

Darcy looked down. Somehow a rose had attached itself to his sleeve and was gesturing with him. He reached down and detached the thorns from his sleeve and looked back at his companions. "Where was I?"

"You were about to remark about how lovely this garden is this time of year."

Darcy wrinkled his brow. "No, it wasn't."

"Then you were going to say that perhaps we should take a turn about the rest of the garden? It's soooo refreshing."

Lizzie was perplexed. Had Uncle Thomas been in the wine already? It wasn't even noon yet. But she raised no objections as she left the small wilderness and returned to the well-maintained part of the lawn. She noticed her other sisters scattered around the lawn in

various states of wetness.

"Did your father install a swimming pool that I haven't seen, Lizzie?" Thomas looked at his niece. "Or is there a problem with the water pump that all clothes must be washed on the person?"

"It's Mama's latest idea for getting dresses to maintain their shape. As soon as it's dry, the next dress is put on to be washed."

"I shall have to tell my sister about that," remarked Darcy. "She's been trying for years to get dresses to hold their shape, to no avail."

"Well, if she needs any more hints, I'm sure my sister Lydia will be more than happy to oblige." Darcy looked over at Lydia, who was rearranging her shelf, oblivious to observation.

Eyebrows raised, he replied, "Well, perhaps I'll merely pass that one on." Just then Lydia reached into the top of her dress and manually shifted her right bosom.

"Denny!" Lydia cried, whipping her hand out of her dress and waving. She dashed over to the hedge to converse with the corporal on the other side.

"Are you sure you don't want your sister to meet Lydia?" Lizzie asked, innocently. "Why ever not? Lydia is the sweetest, most unassuming girl there ever was." Darcy looked at Lizzie archly, and she continued blithely. "Truly, any girl who does not throw herself at every redcoat that passes isn't being true to herself."

Unsure what to think, Darcy turned away, only to find his vision assaulted by the figure of Mary in a garish orange dress, plastered to her skinny frame. He turned his head again to witness Kitty in the act of rearranging her corset. Eyes bugging, he returned his gaze to rest on Lizzie, who was doing her best not to laugh. "Doesn't your sister do that?" Just then a cow bellowed farther down the lane and Jane cried, "I will!"

Darcy, stricken, looked to Lizzie.

"I gave her no such instruction," said Lizzie sincerely.

Darcy burst into laughter. "Well, before any of my livestock is harmed, Miss Bennett, will you marry me?"

Too stunned for words, Lizzie nodded.

From down the lane, a frantic lowing was heard, with Charles's impassioned pleas of love echoing behind.

Lizzie resolved to check the flour again as soon as possible.

The Principle of Slavery
by
Andrew Garner

The principle of slavery still informs the school:

The fixed desks and chairs of unmoved souls,
Paragons of virtue at following the rule
Of teachers who themselves have slavish roles.

The only one promoted is the fool
Who can parrot the lame mill's grist;
This mealy-mouthed and timid tool
Is Darwin's high school survivalist.

Liberals and Conserves alike agree:
Put uniforms on urban minority.
At least if they won't dance to our tune,
We'll keep them stuck in school in June.

Oh, to be a child now.
I'd stick pins on all their seats. And how!

The Tale of Piecemeal, the Prince Who Got Wood

by
Jonathan Harper

Once upon a time, there lived the mentally challenged Prince Piecemeal. Piecemeal liked to take long walks in the forest by himself, each day wandering farther and farther than anyone had gone, before he would come home. Finally, the inevitable happened, and the mentally challenged prince became dreadfully lost. Every direction he looked, the woods were thick and the paths were almost hidden under the falling leaves and thickets.

Finally, the prince came to a small clearing in which a single tree stood majestically in the center. As the prince stared into the tree's beautiful pine needle coat, luscious bark and seductive pine cones - the prince's heart flew like it never had before ... and he realized he was in love.

"I must have this tree," the prince thought, "for never have I seen one so lovely!"

So, with all the modesty he could muster, the prince approached the tree, who was graceful in her stationary position, looked up at her and said, "Hey! Nice shoes... Wanna fuck?"

Obviously unimpressed by the prince's vulgarities, the tree just ignored him.

The mentally challenged Prince Piecemeal realized then that such proper maidens, such as pinewoods, needed to be wooed appropriately. So, he gathered up his courage and blurted out, "Oh - please forgive me for my rude behavior - I was simply overcome with lust from seeing your radiant beauty. I am mentally challenged Prince Piecemeal, of Abr'Ickshort, of the kingdom of Afullode, and I have come to seek your branch in marriage."

The tree was obviously still offended and did not reply.

So, the prince continued... "You must know - I have never this way before. I would staple waffles to my forehead, pluck my eyebrows and pass up bingo night just for you!"

The tree still ignored him.

"Well, now that you know of my love for you - you must tell me if you love me as well. If you will return my love, say nothing! - for words can never fully describe those feelings. But if you are to reject me, speak now and leave me to my sorrow..."

The tree, of course, said nothing.

Overcome with joy, the Prince did the ancient ceremonial dance as a sign of their future union. When he had finished the "electric slide", he reapproached his love with a new purpose. "We must be married at once my dear, sweet, sapling! For I am afraid that if we wait, some other mentally challenged prince will come and steal you away from me! But first, I must know your name!"

The tree didn't say a word.

"Why are you so shy with me, my love?" the prince gasped. "Perhaps you do not have a

name!?! Well, fine then, from now on you shall be known as Erma! Yes, Erma - my little talking tree..." And with that, Prince Piecemeal ran off to plan the wedding.

And he and Erma the talking tree lived happily ever after, until Erma died tragically in childbirth.

Don't ask about the kids.

Venus Met Mars...And Laughed
by
Christine Hohlbaum

My husband is a very smart man. He has a Ph.D. in Biology and works in a highly specialized field. He uncomplainingly brings home the bacon, mows the lawn, and takes out the trash. But, when it comes to the world of domesticity, he is as thick as a New York City phone book. It's not that I want him to be a woman, exactly, but some of that womanly intuition sure would come in handy around the house. Dealing with the children, for example, requires more than a Ph.D. It requires common sense and a bit of practice, neither of which I believe he has. Take the other night, for instance.

Our nine-month-old had been crying for well over one-half hour until I finally came to see what the matter was. Andreas had been tending to him, God bless him, and he wasn't having much luck. When I picked the baby up, I noticed that he was burning up.

"Jackson has a temperature of 102°F," I blandly stated, lifting the thermometer to show my dumb-founded husband whose eyes were squinting in a 2 a.m. blur. "Did you not notice?" I continued.

"Well...he just felt a little warm to me," he replied, already shuffling towards the bed. I stayed up for another hour, nursing the baby back to sleep. Andreas was snoring within minutes.

One day, I went into Sophia's room to make the bed. There was a strange smell coming from Jackson's room. I decided to put the bed-making on hold for a moment to investigate. Jackson's little fist was hanging out between the crib bars, and his blanket had been cast onto the floor. I noticed the black bean particle on his ear first. Then, I saw his pizza-stained shirt and located the source of the odor. His pants were so poopy that they could have filled three diapers. He was fast asleep, and my husband was downstairs on the computer. I immediately reproached him for treating our son like a street urchin and vowed that he would have to give Jackson a bath when he awoke.

My husband's tolerance for dirt is remarkable. It doesn't seem to bother him when the shower curtain sticks together and oozes pink sludge because he refuses to straighten it out after showering. In turn, I refuse to let the shower curtain get so bad that black urchins skittle from it when I give it a shake. I am left to scrub the shower stall despite my multiple pleas to my husband that it might be his turn to clean the bathroom. Likewise, he doesn't seem to care when we have to start wearing shoes around the house because the left-over food particles on the kitchen floor are so hard that they begin to cut our feet as we walk over them. I am always amazed at his ability to leave the wet sponge face down in the sink. It becomes so odiferous that even the neighborhood dog starts to howl. The other day, the baby knocked down a plant, leaving a puddle of potting soil next to the plant stand. It's still sitting there.

I take heart in knowing that I am not alone. My friend's husband flings his clothes down wherever he happens to be standing. She is left to decide whether they are clean, half-clean, dirty, or filthy. She usually opts for washing whatever is lying around. She said that if her washing machine were human, someone might think she was having an affair with it. She even had a dream that she called her husband Tide instead of Todd.

It's not that my husband doesn't try to help around the house. He has gotten quite good at recognizing dirty dishes when he sees them. When he complained that the gloves I use were too small, I bought him a pair of extra large durable strength gloves for convenience and comfort. He had the tendency of turning my gloves inside out when he took them off, and then leaving them that way. I forever had to turn them back inside themselves again and blow the gloves up like a balloon to retrieve the fingers. The new glove solution worked for a while, but it didn't last long. He started using his fancy extra large fishing gloves for yardwork. My dainty Playtexes once again fell victim to innards exposure.

While he cleans the dirty dishes on occasion, getting him to recognize the dirty countertop, crumb-filled table, and Cheerio-bestrewn floor is quite a different matter. Even the crunch and squeak of his shoes as he passes over the kitchen floor do little to draw his attention to the need for sweeping and mopping. Most of the time, I can handle the task of consciousness-raising. But, yesterday I'd had my fill of domestic instruction.

The stars were aligned in such a way that the children napped simultaneously for an overlapping fifty-six minutes. During that time, I scrambled about the house, lifting off marmalade stains from the kitchen counter, polishing the furniture, and finally Windexing the large mirror in our living room. Per my husband's explicit instructions, the children and I were to be out in the late afternoon. The chances of keeping the house clean until my husband came home were high. He was having some guy friends over to watch a pre-season football game. At the time, it seemed like a good idea to clean the house for his friends. I wanted to give off the impression that I had it all together despite having two kids. It was only that evening that I asked myself, "Why did I bother?"

While my kids and I were at Chuck E. Cheese, my husband and friends were tearing up the house more than my two kids and their ten friends would have on any given muddy day. When we got back several hours later, beer bottles were strewn all over the living room. It smelled like a frat house. What was even more unbelievable? Half of the guys had smashed chips and guacamole into the only rug in the entire house.

"There was a little mishap this evening, Babu," my husband began rather sheepishly. "The guys got a little out of hand, and the plate of guacamole just fell off the coffee table." He paused and looked frightened as he peered into my eyes with a look of remorse and hope.

The guacamole was still sitting in a heap on the rug. It looked as though the guys had continued to eat it from the floor.

I paused to gather strength and wisdom for a moment. "And why is it still lying on the carpet?" I managed to ask without visibly shaking. Several cowering men passed by my peripheral vision. I heard the slam of the screen door.

"We weren't certain as to which mop to use. You have so many," Andreas explained in a tone that revealed he believed what he was saying.

With a straight face, I pretended to hand my husband a tablet and a glass. He looked at me and said, "What's that?"

"An estrogen pill and a cup of common sense," I said wryly. "Oh, and one more thing," I said as I opened the closet door, "here are all the cleaning supplies you will need to sanitize

the entire house. Call me on the cell phone when the kids are asleep and the house is in order." I turned on my heel, left the house, and headed for the movies.

Contributor Biographies

Stan Lyness is a Boston area songwriter who in 2002 took a poetry class so that his poetry would fill his songwriting with immediacy and purpose. Instead, his poems descended to the level of novelty songs. Mr. Lyness currently aspires to land a day job in his day career of software development.

Genevieve Valentine is a writer in the DC area who is still having trouble with the concept of cereal.

Christopher Woods is the author of *Under a Riverbed Sky*, a collection of prose poems and brief fictions from *Panther Creek Press*, and *Heart Speak*, a collection of stage monologues for actors and actresses from *Stone River Press*. <http://www.stoneriverpress.com>. His play, *Moonbirds*, recently received its NYC premiere by *Personal Space Theatrics*. He lives in Houston.

Charlotte Jones has appeared or is forthcoming in *Nerve Cowboy*, *Smokelong Quarterly*, *Passport Journal*, *Texas Poetry Calendar*, *Bellevue Literary Review* and *Sideshow: Tales of the Bigtop and the Bizarre*.

On the "con" side, she called Andrew Editor And Chieftain, and now he's been running around the office like a dumbass insisting that's his new name. Thank you so much, Charlotte.

David Gwilym Anthony has a website. No, he does! Look!
<http://www.davidgwilymanthony.co.uk/>

Also, we're told he can speak the language of the animals, especially ferrets and hawks and stuff.

Anna Psitos, currently living in Germany, is not actually German. Gotcha!

Andrew Garner, often called the Father Of Renaissance Literature, is really old, then, isn't he?

Jonathan Harper fought Dracula! It was amazing! You should have been there! He was all holding up a cross and all, "Stop there, fiend!" and he was all running after Dracula and shit. It was great.

"Venus Met Mars... And Laughed" is an excerpt from *Diary of a Mother: Parenting Stories and Other Stuff* by **Christine Louise Hohlbaum**. Christine is an American author living near Munich, Germany with her husband and two children. When she's not leading playgroups, writing, or attending PTA meetings, she prefers to generally frolic. For more of Christine's writing, visit her web site at:
<http://mypages.iparenting.com/webs/diaryofamother/diaryofamother.html>