

“Give me fifty words about a Beaver...”

by Larry Strattner

...Professor Wumbat begins. His prompts begin every class. He holds up his small electronic timer; pushes the Start button.

Sounds of erasable pencils and crinkling lined paper fill the room. Professor Wumbat is a devotee of Elmore Leonard, who likewise believes the pace of cursive writing more conducive to creativity and erasability a tool of progress.

Freddy Gulash, sophomore History major with too-long hair and prominent front teeth scribbles, “...the mysterious, inviting tangle you see up Marion Plibus' dress when, rushing for class, she forgets to put on her Victoria Secrets.” Freddy's dorm mates call him “Fang” when sober, “Tooth” if high. He is fond of neither sobriquet.

Marion Bliz, a proper freshman, reaches the end of her first sentence. “...and an important North American mammal species contributing to the promulgation of America's wetlands...” and chews her eraser...

...as Harold Tench, third year mechanical engineering, struggles with syntax on, “...carefully shaved to a taper so not to protrude above, or from side edges, of the thong...” Harold's frat-mates call him Mr. Slime. He considers his observations clinical.

Wumbat punches the Stop button on the timer, calling, “time!” as Gulash scratches through, “...damp, smelling of lemon tinged, stuffed, baked haddock.”

Professor Wumbat, whose previous prompts included “The Cock Crows Twice,” “Turning the Screw” and “Pecker, a movie,” notices small beads of sweat above the fidgeting Gulash's eyebrows and smiles. Wumbat encourages non-MFA candidates to take his class and grades them generously. They are his bounteous source for

“Sexual Aberration on Campus America,” his clandestine, surefire, tenure pièce de résistance.

In the pregnant hush, as Wumbat prepares the student reading-order, Gulash eyes an oblivious Bliz. A small pearl of spittle gleams on his lower lip.

