

Creative Handwriting

by Mimi Vaquer

I told them to get creative. Nouns and verbs connected, "Come up with something disjointed, off kilter," I said. A writing exercise to get the letters flowing on the paper.

A simple 6th grade lesson has brought me now to this. This, ultimately an admission. Of what I cannot say exactly. I only know in the closest of certainties that someone, or something, has spoken through the blinds of my living room that stay closed to the tiniest pinprick of light. The object refuses to speak to me, yet I feel that it has found a voice somewhere in its folds of matter.

Ricky connected his words with the same innocence found in any eleven year old. He had listened to my directions, it was obvious. He spoke of the hand in the same way the other students read their exercises. Flowers and water parks and shotgun privileges typical, but Ricky knew something when he spoke. He did not say a "blue sofa" the way he might in formal interrogation, but the intent and the knowledge were there, and it served its purpose in chilling my every action for the past week.

I found the hand eight months ago, after I planned to grow a meadow of tiny yellow blossoms in my yard. It lay in a shallow grave. My tool only disturbed five inches of the dirt before I felt it tapping on the fragile bone. The skin was intact, black and leathered, with no remnant of the fluids that had once kept it animate. I immediately pulled the hand from the ground and moved it inside where I could inspect it further, away from the curious eyes of neighbors.

Understandably, considering my appropriate shock, I did not pull any more dirt from the spot where I found it. I supposed that the hand had been lost by a wandering scavenger bird, so I continued my seed planting until the ground was covered. The hand sat with

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its fingers curled in a rather welcoming gesture on the top of my night table for the following week. I had no ideas for it yet.

Ricky was direct. "The hand sits on the sofa and watches TV," he read. He knows he cannot rely on coincidence with something so specific claimed! Still his eyes kept steady, and even showed a glint of delight as though he were proud of his humor and originality. I knew then that it was only a matter of time before he or his father came to my door and rapped their knuckles hard against the wood, mocking the very hand they had come to collect.

I have since acquired many rolls of tape and covered the glass of my windows with paper so black that my skin has taken on a ghostly pallor. Out of fear, I can now only speak to the hand behind the locked doors of my bedroom. Even then, I keep it hidden under the blankets and close to my face in the most intimate of manners.

My memory of events has suffered it seems, and I am not sure if this is a result of Ricky's unveiling of secrets, or a culmination of hints leading to a breakdown of thought. I cannot remember my garden before the meadow, or where exactly I found the hand in relation to the shrubs lining the yard. As I try to reach even farther back in my memory, there are even greater portions that have greyed compared to the present. But I still feel confident this has to be yet another result of the trauma to which Ricky has intentionally subjected me.

The hand refuses to speak to me now. Before Ricky read his story to the class, I would come home every night and press the hand's fingers tightly into my own as we shared our evenings on my blue leather sofa. Its voice crept into my own in a manner of conversation that had come to be the closest of any relationship I had ever had. Despite maintaining its silence on the matter of how it had come to be buried in my garden, we managed to devote ourselves to one another in the purist of ways. This turn of events engenders a

definite animosity towards the child, whose steps I hear in my subconscious pacing the flagstones of my sidewalk at every moment of wakefulness and sleep.

Today Ricky was silent in class. I called on him to read from the textbook, and he looked at me with a glazed expression that said he knew I was prodding him for a reaction. I have decided that I must address this situation proactively, as the uncertainty of what is to happen has paralyzed me. I have not bathed in a week, and have taken to sucking the thumb of the hand as I lie in bed staring at the cloaked window listening for any sound of a visitor.

Tomorrow is the time. I have recently become enlightened due to many hours of meditation, and probably even more from keeping the tissue of the hand in constant contact with my saliva. It is through this meditation that I have come to realize my folly in mistaking Ricky for a mere student. I know now what he is, and I plan to come forward before his lunchtime hour.

The sheets are folded in the front seat of my car, and the hand is wrapped in a linen scarf. I have prepared my tools carefully and secured them firmly in the breast of my winter jacket. I look forward to the afternoon sunset, my windows naked, and both of my arms extended in firm grasp of the two hands that will speak to me softly, calmly, deep into the lilac hours of the morning.

