

Lumina

Fermilab Creative Writer's Club Anthology



The 3rd Edition - November 2004

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the 4th annual writing contest winners

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Welcome

[Fermilab Creative Writers' Club](#) was founded in April of 1997. It exists to support, encourage and advance the personal writing of its member authors. The main focus of the club is reviewing and commenting on member authors' work. From time to time, we also do some writing exercises.

FCWC conducts an annual writing contest. It is open for all members of the Fermilab family and winners are awarded prizes. In this edition we are publishing the winning entries of [Writing Contest 2004](#). Entries were judged in the category of Poems, Short Stories and Short Short Stories.

Marilyn Kasules's entry won in the Poems category. **Fatimeh Pahlavan's** entries won in Short and Short-short story categories.

Hope you enjoy reading them and consider joining our club. Your feedback, as always, is welcome.

Dinker Charak,
[Editor](#)

Mobius

Marilyn Kasules

Searching self, looking deep,
Turning over in my mind.
Finding only pieces and particles.
Most, as yet, unnamed.

Probing, tearing down.
Rebuilding, only to find
The pieces are the same.
Like a wheel in a wheel.

Analyzing – line them up,
Count them one by one.
There's no inside no outside
Life is only a mobius band.

Particles of me – past and present
Held by some mysterious glue.
The deeper I search, the more I find
I have more questions – less answers.

To Dance

Fatimeh Pahlavan

I.

For a moment, she stood motionless. She heard the robust beat of the drum throbbing behind her, pulsating through the ground and into her body. As she listened, she focused on her bare feet; she noticed how they met with the ground to form a fragile bond—one that could easily be broken with a single step. Soon, a tender melody was added the din of the background. She lifted her stare and slowly raised her hands above her head, coiling them about and motioning toward the sky with her fingertips. She began to sway her hips. They coiled round in a circle as she arched backwards, throwing her head behind her and biting her lower lip. Then she leaned forward, bending from the waist and extending her arms in front of her — beckoning the crowd to join her. She lifted her heels to balance on her toes and glided softly across the polished ground. Her body curled elegantly, each limb shifting as if it were boneless, made only of delicate, supple flesh.

II.

The woman was of larger form, clad in a knee-length black cocktail dress and chunky, gold heels. Her hair was pulled back into a bun with an oversized bejeweled butterfly clip and her bangs were feathered in a larger-than-life fashion so that they hung just over her left eye. She wobbled about the floor, trying not to spill her drink and giving thumbs up to strangers. She motioned clumsily and scrunched her face in a "hell yeah!" sort of expression. Having tossed her empty glass onto a nearby table, she clenched her hands into fists. She shook them forcefully in front of her as she stomped in place and threw her head around in a circular motion. Then she let her hands straight out to her sides. She flapped them violently and accidentally smacked the gentleman standing next to her. She carried on, oblivious to the odious look that he gave her over his shoulder.

III.

This time there were two of them. Two girls who looked to be in their early to mid twenties. Both were wearing outfits that I could have easily fit into my side pocket. Their hair, like their taste for attention, was huge. They waited until

everyone else left the floor, then dragged one another onto the stage area. Prancing awkwardly about, they humored the audience with forced sensuality and pseudo intimacy. Their sheer tackiness was engrossing. Eventually, more people decided to join them and the floor was once again crowded. Before long the big hair was nowhere to be seen -- the two girls had been sucked into the abyss of people.

King for a Day

Fatimeh Pahlavan

Karl doodles on a napkin as a delicate stream of smoke ascends from his cigarette and dissipates into nothing. A sharp, dark line extends from the tip of his pen. From the line comes a nose, then a face, then pause. After an instant, the pen dashes across the napkin. It envelops the portrait in a mass of scribbles, burying all remnants of the life that momentarily existed. Karl snatches the napkin, crumples it between his fingers, and tosses it onto the tabletop. He looks up from his spoiled masterpiece.

“Roy, I’ll have a vodka.” He then chuckles, “Put it on my tab.”

With a smirk, the bartender responds with the cliché comment, “I think you’ve had enough, ol’ boy.”

Karl shrieks, “God dammit man, I’ll tell you when I’ve had enough!!”

They explode into laughter and Roy slides a cold glass across the counter. Karl catches it without looking and bends his head over the mouth of the cup. The heavy stench shoots up at him, filling his eyes and reaching down his throat. Karl scrunches his face; his wrinkled features fold over one another and the saggy flesh of his face quivers slightly. He leans backward and dumps the fiery liquid into his mouth. His posture straightens as the liquor makes its way down his throat.

“Ehhhhhhahhhhh, good shit, man,” Karl laughs. As he sets the glass down, Roy leans over the counter in front of Karl and says, “Last drink of the night, okay? I’m getting’ ready to close up.”

Karl then hears the shrill creak of a door. He turns around and his stare slowly focuses on the figure of a man standing in the entranceway. Karl squints and cocks his head to one side. The man he sees is tall and well built. He wears a suit of vibrant blue color and his young face lacks any wrinkles. The man walks toward Karl, dragging his feet and scuffing the dented ground with his pointy leather shoes. He sits down on the free stool next to Karl.

As the man loosens his tie he says, “Uh, bartender, give me a... oh, I don’t know, what do you recommend?”

The corners of Roy’s lips curl upward and he says, “Well, son it depends. How bad was your day?”

The young man looks down and smiles uncomfortably at his shoes. “Uh, well,” he says, fiddling with his fingers, “I’m really not much of a drinker.”

The young man looks up, nodding awkwardly. Karl responds in a sarcastic tone, “Neither am I,” then snorts with amusement. The laugh ripples from the back of his throat; it pulsates through to the tip of his tongue. Karl smiles

uncontrollably as the warmth of the room embraces him. Feeling quite comfortable at this point, Karl asks the man his name.

“Adam,” he responds.

“I’m Karl. How old are you, son?”

“Thirty-four. And you?”

“Twenty-seven years old, thirty-seven dead.”

Roy glances over, his shoulders bouncing with laughter.

Karl continues, “Nah, I’m just joshin’ with ya’. I’m sixty-somethin’. But what brings a fellow like yourself to this fine establishment?” As he speaks, Karl extends his arm behind him, indicating the torn leather booths and dull light bulbs scattered about the bar.

“No particular reason, really. I mean, I don’t drink very often. Like I said before, I’m not big on alcohol.” As Adam responds, Roy places a tall glass of rum and coke in front of him. Adam reaches for it eagerly and gulps it down with surprising ease.

“I could’ve sworn you said you’re not a drinker,” Karl notes.

Adam sets the nearly empty glass down and wipes his mouth on his sleeve. “I’m not,” he says. Then adds, “Maybe I just have a natural tolerance.” He then remarks, “I hope this drink isn’t too expensive.”

Karl blurts in response, “The pricier the better, boy! Don’t ya’ know, kid? If a man can afford a costly addiction, then it’s not an addiction.” Unsure whether or not he should laugh, Adam shrugs his shoulders and looks quizzically at Karl. “Adam,” begins Karl, “the more expensive the wine, the more civilized the alcoholic. No one’s got any problems with the privileged drunks; the same ones who can afford a maid to throw out the empty bottles.”

“I’m not sure if I agree with that,” replies Adam.

“It’s true!” exclaims Karl. He throws his hands forward and grabs Adam by the shoulders. “It’s true, kid! If you’re born lucky, ya’ aint got no problems!”

Adam leans back and shakes Karl’s grip off of him. He lifts his hands in defense, tense and unsure of what to expect from a drunken stranger.

The pitch of Karl’s voice heightens. As more of the liquor settles in, he becomes lost in his own train of thought. Karl frantically tries to get his words out in the right order. “I swear it’s true. Listen, a poor..., a poor...” Karl begins to breathe heavily, “a poor man addicted to alcohol is vermin, but a rich man addicted to murder, like, fucking Bush, is a hero! Do you see, kid??”

Roy reaches over the table and places his hand on Karl’s shoulder. He says, “Calm down, man. You’re getting’ fussed up over nothin’.”

“Shut the hell up, Roy,” screeches Karl. He slurs, “*I’m* a low life ‘cause I drink.” Karl stops for a moment and shakes his head as if to organize his thoughts. Pointing his finger directly at Adam, Karl shouts, “If those rich pigs would just scratch beneath... under... dammit, underneath the surface... whatever! If they just took a moment to look at me, really look. If they could stop being confused long enough, they might friggin’ learn something.”

By this point, Adam’s cheeks are flushed with rage and his mouth is agape. He chest heaves violently and he slaps Karl’s finger out of his face, “You’re the

confused one! Drinking's just a poor man's excuse for Prozac. All it results in is more conflict, more stupidity spewing out of that vile mouth of yours!"

Sweat pours down Karl's face in thick droplets. He fiercely shakes his head back and forth. He takes large gulps of saliva and his eyes water with frustration. He wheezes, his stomach puffs out, and his body jerks. He opens his mouth, desperately hoping that something brilliant will explode out of it. Yet all he manages to do is let out a loud, crude belch.

Adam leans back, his features coiled in disgust. "Fucking scum!" he barks, nearly gagging. Nauseated, he shoves the stool out from beneath him and lets it fall to the ground. He kicks it out of his way and glances back up at Karl. "Disgusting," he sneers. Adam marches toward the exit and yanks it open. He tears through the doorway, and disappears into the gloom of the evening.

Karl's head drops and he drools a bit as he stares at his shoes. Roy crosses behind the bar and approaches Karl. He throws Karl's arm over his shoulder and helps him slowly make his way off the stool. "I think you've had enough, buddy," murmurs Roy. Karl's eyes are shut and he doesn't respond. Roy continues, "Time to go home. You need some sleep." Allowing Karl to lean on his shoulder, Roy walks him to the exit. Karl stumbles over his own steps, losing his balance and clutching onto Roy for support. The two make their way down the front steps. Roy props Karl against the handrail, then shuts and locks the door behind them. He then reclaims his grasp on Karl, and slowly guides him down onto the darkened sidewalk.

Karl lifts his head slightly, his eyelids sagging and his mouth split open. "You know what?" he mutters, "one of these days I'm gonna' find my own way home."