WINNERS OF THE 2010 COLLEGE WRITING CONTEST

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- Cover Art Entitled Two Koi by Brian Roach
- Page 6 Entitled Paper Hannya by Brian Roach
- Page 9 Untitled by Tony Nguyen
- Page 12 Untitled by George Cornine
- Page 15 Entitled One Day All Women Will Become Evil by Brian Roach
- Page 25 Untitled by Kyle Russ

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Brenna Filipello, a junior majoring in Communication Studies, for “The Lifestyle of the Visually Impaired,” a memoir written in PWR 295 Introduction to Professional Writing, Professor David Franke

Sarah Kane, a senior majoring in English, for “Narcissistic Personality Disorder in Willa Cather’s ‘Paul’s Case,’” an essay written in ENG 422 American Women Writers, Distinguished Teaching Professor Denise Knight

Amie Whitlock, a senior majoring in Geology and Environmental Science, for “An Untitled Piece of Science Fiction,” a short story written in PWR 212 Writing Fiction, Professor Victoria Boynton

Lauren Menchini, a freshman pre-major, for “Bullying,” an essay written in CPN 102 Writing Studies in the Community I, Professor John Suarez

James Reardon, a graduate student in the M.A.T. Program in English, for “I Feel It in My Teeth, and Hers, and Hers Too,” a memoir written in ENG 504 Seminar in the Composing Process, Distinguished Teaching Professor Mary Lynch Kennedy

Taylor Morris, a junior majoring in Professional Writing, for the “Cortland Professional Writing Web Site,” http://cortlandprofessionalwriting.tumblr.com/, created in PWR 415 Experiments in Creative Writing, Professor Victoria Boynton
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“Hey, has anyone seen my keys?”
“Dude, you *drove* here?” Paul brandishes soap in my direction.
“Yeah…” I’m ducking underneath benches, thinking, I have no pockets, are they still in the car?

“Why the fuck did you *drive* here?” Paul advances, his register rising. The girls who squeal when he runs in nothing but navy spandex have no idea what we put up with behind locker room doors. A football-to-cross-country convert is the sort of rarity that takes a group dynamic by storm.

I’ve recently reached the cusp at which the discomfort of pulling jeans over sweaty skin outweighs the discomfort of showering with a bunch of men. This actually puts me well into the top third of the team, a generally bashful, scrawny bunch. The majority of them change with their heads in their lockers like ostriches.

“Collin, you live like five minutes away,” chirps Dennis facelessly from the other room. Everyone already knows this.

“I left my clothes at home and I was late.” I’m disoriented. “I never even came in here, did I?”

“Cancer: you’re a runner.”

That was Chris, from the steamy recesses of the shower. Cancer’s my haze-badge, coined by the upperclassmen years ago (think “colon”) that, as captain, I now wear with some degree of pride.

“I know, dude. I still would’ve been late for the fartlek.”

“Fartlehhk!” It demands an echo.

“Cliff explicitly told us not to be late today. Also,” pausing for effect, “I *drive* because I *can*.” Not even three months before, I had passed the driver’s test with thirty points off—the most possible. I boast that the examiner probably could have found something else wrong if she didn’t think I deserved a license.

A fartlek is uniquely designed to put you into oxygen debt and keep you there. The workout alternates between tempo-pace “recovery” and maximum exertion, or VO2-max. The kicker is that the intervals are randomized, so you never know how much it’s going to drain you and how much time you have to recover. Continuous, yet chaotic and varied. Time loses all meaning.

This particular fartlek will end up being my locus, my excuse, the butler to my who-dunit after a year of negative diagnoses. All-nighter neurological tests, the cold goop on each node seeping through my hair. “I’m a slow reader,” a quick flash in each of the eyes, a tap on the knee and I’m diagnosed with ADD and loaded up with stomach-yodeling Concerta.
The situation itself will always be embarrassingly simple to describe: I hit a fire hydrant. In perfect, beautiful driving conditions. No one else involved, which makes the whole event tidily solipsistic. It never even crosses my mind that I’m not okay to drive.

“He must have been going at least fifty miles per hour to get the fire hydrant that deep in there,” my mother, a pediatrician convinced that there’s a cause other than “me,” will say to countless acquaintances on the phone in the coming year. A broken record. I am not speeding. There is a speed bump, and my slushy mind traces its parabolic arc. My eyes rest on the conifer in front of the middle school that had been the nexus of my first year in this town. I turn my head further to the elm that I had climbed as Paul and others—the best friends I’d had—threw pebbles at me. I am focusing on sounds now, listening for laughter. My vision drifts, rotates, diagonal to the side of the road.

Who am I to say this isn’t a petit-mal seizure? A heart murmur? Attention-deficit disorder? Who are they to say it isn’t just who I am?

And all of a sudden, as I move off the road, a change in shutter speed, like those sharper-than-reality Gladiator-type flicks. A microscopic awareness of every clot of pavement and dirt each wheel hits. A complete failure of instinct, less than three months after receiving my license—am I even hitting the brake? I’m hyperaware, but experience no time-dilation. The first coherent thoughts rise out of the beehive silence following a cola-can crunch. This was no dent, no touch-up paint job, I already knew. I was uninjured. The car’s flesh was wonderful padding.

The puffer-fish alert of airbags had failed, but I didn’t need them.

Who, finally, is anyone to say anything really happened at all? That’s my current, private theory. When the moment became important, it sizzled its way into another part of my brain, cloaked in indeterminate haze. Oxygen debt, okay, maybe: so much needed coloring in. And no one, I soon realized, gave a shit about the parabola of the speed bump.

So you didn’t even, like, sneak off to smoke a joint during lunch?”

“Jesus, Danica, this isn’t IHS. Only the Goths do that in Trumansburg. And, like, maybe Duncan.” Hoping for a laugh but my sister’s furrowed. Incidentally, speaking over a bowl—Danica claims that her new job, straight into the outer rungs (recruitment branch) of an investment firm, is exhausting but intellectually unsatisfying. She reluctantly chooses to “tube out” most evenings. Her boyfriend Rob’s eyes slightly glazed over with My Name Is Earl flickering on the screen. “Besides, I have never run high in my life. I can’t imagine how impossible that would be.”

“Mom still doesn’t believe you, you know.”

“Well, of course she’s going to be disappointed if she starts hooking me up to machines looking for the ‘reason’”—with heaving scare quotes—“I got in an accident. Do you know how easy it was to get on Concerta?”

“Well, with mom there next to you, I bet the neurologist didn’t ask too many questions. How is that going? Does it help?”

“I read about four times faster, which is nice for schoolwork. But I can barely choke down half a bagel in the morning without feeling nauseous.”

“Yeah, you look thin.” Most of my family says this to me every time they see me.

“The point is, I used to get totally offended when people called me on not paying attention to their conversation, they’d call me a ‘space cadet,’ right. That really pissed me off for some reason. But once it happened a few times I accepted it as part of my identity, I just stare into space and think about songs sometimes.” Even driving after the accident, dragging mechanical entrails—technically fleeing the scene—it was Radiohead’s “How to Disappear Completely,” the one that repeats “I’m not here, this isn’t happening” over and over and over again. I toy with telling my older sister about this, since she’s a Radiohead fan.
“Yeah, I’m kind of like that too.” This is totally untrue; my older sister got every last drop of attentive-genes my parents possessed.

“Like sometimes I’ll be driving late at night with music playing and I’ll think about how the song would sound if it just kept on going after a car crash.”

“That’s kind of fucked up.”

Worried eye contact. Rob, pre-furrowed, slowly turns his head from the television and echoes, “yeah that’s kind of fucked up.” I make an exaggerated grimace, and Danica cracks up, which gets me and Rob going.

I'd be done with New York City if Danica hadn't just moved here. Its size cancels out its personality; its personality is its size. My parents wanted to take my first October break to show me her new place in Central Park West, and Danica requested that I stay in her apartment itself while my parents went broke at a hotel. She’s actually the first of my three siblings to broach the topic of my accident, and I’m overwhelmingly grateful that she’s struck a conversational, head-cocked-confusion tone about the whole thing.

My little sister’s half-face peering around corners, watchful but silent, perhaps scared.

My brother, usually the king of surgical, wounding insults at the climax of arguments, has only referred to me as a “fucked-up brain-dead faggot who crashes cars” in one instance: I had told a mutual female friend that he and his girlfriend had been having embarrassingly loud sex all summer long. The gossip circuit closed in less than two days. Maybe I deserved that one.

And of course for months and months I’ve been inundated with my mom’s sober, “what really happened there?” attitude, she convinced I must have blacked out because I can provide so little helpful information. My freshman year of college has been a welcome respite.

I wake up the next day dehydrated to a shrunken head on my older sister’s futon. I don’t yet know that I will live here with her in January for an internship. The cats ricocheting around the room emitting staccato meows will be my alarm, the slight puff of a histamine response will become a familiar sensation—to say nothing of the dehydration. This morning, I wake up to my mother crying.

“Duncan got in an accident.”

She’s not talking to me. She’s in my older sister’s bedroom. Rob must have gone to work. My parents must have gotten up early and driven here from their hotel.

“What do you mean? What kind of accident?” my sister demands a little shrilly.

My mom is dragging her feet around the house noisily; my dad is still. “A car accident,” she sneers through a clogged nose.

“He went out to see his girlfriend late last night,” my dad provides blankly. My brother is unlicensed.

I'm not even looking for more information. “Wh- wh-” I am reminded of a dream in which I am in my house in the middle of night and I see, several rooms down, someone dart through the window and move upstairs silently. I try to scream Mom but am paralyzed and cannot speak over the tiniest rasp.

I am tingling with dread. Dehydration gives the room a heavy tempo, my throat has closed from the damned cats. My brother is in the hospital, tubes hooked up all over him, his pissy, rebellious personality vegetated, he will die soon. My mother is crying.
All this has the shutter speed of a déjà vu, like some unseen editor has decided to quote it in my life’s cliffs notes. The horror of the months to come, how my schoolwork and friends and values and trajectory will be crowded out by this, playing out like pleated tarot in my brain.

“Is he okay?” Danica finally blurs, still with the skeptical pinch in her forehead.

My mom spits, “he doesn’t have a scratch!”

History repeats itself.

“This weekend,” my dad calmly explains, pushing down an ironic smile perking the corners of his mouth like a tic, “was supposed to be his ‘test,’ to see if he could responsibly take care of the house without blowing it.”

“Well, he really fucked it up this time!” my mom bellows in voice more slurred than it ever gets from wine.

My brother held out on mom over the phone, also. “Maybe I should start praying or something”; “Duncan. What happened?” The car—the same white minivan that cost an arm and a leg to repair after my accident—is now totaled, having rolled down a ditch. My brother did not have a license, but he had plenty that I didn’t have: worse conditions, rainy, slimy, autumnal, dark; alcohol in his blood, though he will lie through his teeth just as he did when he took my mom’s BMW out with a bottle of Soco earlier in the past summer; a reason, an actual sound bite—that he “overcorrected” while speeding around a curve.

And he will probably never know that his death has stuck with me more enduringly than any other I’ve known. My grandmother, a sixty-year smoker, had a long decline through lung cancer; my old Physics teacher fought the good fight against esophageal cancer; my Comparative Literature professor was on leave for colon cancer when I graduated. And the accidents of the young: my brother’s girlfriend’s ex, a brat but suddenly a town hero; a less popular kid from the trailer park, dead of aneurism in the hallway outside his sister’s apartment; the old captain of my cross-country team, permanent vegetable after a graduation party went awry; the fat kid whom I wasn’t particularly nice to. I’ve reacted with numbed perplexity sometimes, and sometimes a disillusioned “shucks” of the mind. They have all blurred into each other, and the fiction of Duncan’s death has remained sharp.

But when the smoke clears, the only question left is, whose accident was “better”?

My brother’s serendipitous, somewhat standard teenage idiocy? Or my troubling absence of attendance and cause? It is our one and only stalemate; we’ve both been inclined to hurt each other with whatever we have access to, our entire lives. But we’ve let this one be.

Five years after the fact, I learned that my brother had finally been allowed to take his road test. He got The Grouch, so I’m not surprised that he got seventy points off, failing by an overwhelming margin.

At a bar with him during his birthday, I made a tiny jab about his score—“he could’ve passed you if he really wanted to.”

Duncan, now measured and polo-dressed as a Cornell economics major, looked at me with a cocked eyebrow. “Is… this on?”

I cackled and took a swig. “Nah. No. It’s not.”
The Lifestyle of the Visually Impaired

Brenna Filipello

I've been having the same dream for over a month now. Sometimes I am changing my Facebook status, texting a friend or searching the internet. Other times I am downloading music or uploading a video onto YouTube. As I take part in these normal teenage activities, I am happy and carefree. The scene abruptly changes and I am now running. Although I cannot see anything, I can feel something watching over me. I begin to panic as my strides become longer and exaggerated; my body is shutting down. In the end, my pursuer is relentless and I cannot escape.

Following a familiar pattern, I sit upright. Drenched in sweat, I feel around in the darkness for my glasses, but I cannot find them. Jumping out of bed, I reach for the nearest lamppost and turn on the lights. Without my glasses I cannot clearly focus on my surroundings and I stumble onto my futon. Within five minutes, I’ve taken my room apart, but still cannot find my glasses. Giving up, I turn off the light and climb back into bed. I’ll find them tomorrow, I assure myself. A few hours later, I awake to the beeping of my alarm clock. I hit the snooze button and turn over. For a fleeting moment I imagine myself skipping class and sleeping an extra few hours. I groan, climb out of bed and make my way to the shower. Although I skillfully maneuver around a pile of clothing and unread textbooks scattered around the floor, I still manage to step onto the television remote. As I turn on the shower, I faintly hear the buzz of the television screen and the sound of ABC’s Good Morning America’s opening news story:

A Rutgers University freshman posted a goodbye message on his Facebook Page before jumping to his death after his roommate secretly filmed him during a "sexual encounter" in his dorm room and posted it live on the Internet. (ABC)

Twenty minutes later, I unwillingly step out of the hot shower and begin to assemble the perfect outfit, black skinny-jeans paired with a simple white button down. As I begin to straighten my hair, I look into the mirror. You’ve been having a stressful week and today you deserve to feel pretty, I tell myself. Ten minutes later, finally satisfied with my hair, I add a little bit of blush and mascara. I look at the clock, 9 a.m.; I have an hour before class. I decide to check my email and go to breakfast. As my computer slowly warms up, I continue the search for my glasses. They are not on top, underneath or inside any of the desk draws. Giving up, I turn back to my computer and check my email. I delete a campus-wide email and a few messages about last week’s practice schedule. It is now 9:15 a.m. I put on my winter jacket, a wine-red scarf and brown boots. It’s still snowing outside. As I walk out the door, I ask myself, how bad could one day without glasses really be?

SUNY Cortland Students: In 1991, researchers in a University of Cambridge computer laboratory searched for a solution to a very practical question—was there coffee in the Trojan Room? They pointed a video camera at the pot, wired it to their network, and created the world’s first Web camera. For student convenience, SUNY Cortland’s new webcam system will now give students live-stream access to SUNY Cortland dining facilities, Dunkin Donuts, Dragon’s Den, Neubig and Hilltop. (SUNYCortland)
It is freezing outside. In an attempt to drown out the cold, I turn up the volume of my iPod and tune out my thoughts. A few moments later, I arrive at the campus dining hall. I grab a copy of the *New York Times* and head upstairs. I pour myself a bowl of cereal and a glass of milk and sit down at the nearest table. Midway through breakfast, Brittani sits down beside me. She and I have been best friends since our freshman year of college. Brittani is shorter than I am, almost by a foot, blonde and muscular. A lot of guys prefer her muscular, stocky build to my thin, lanky body.

“Brenna, I’ve been trying to get your attention. Couldn’t you see me waving to you?” she asked.

“No,” I sighed. “I lost my glasses and I can’t see much of anything.”

In response, Brittani closely held up three fingers to my face and asked, “How many fingers am I holding up?”

“I’m not blind!” I added defensively.

I honestly wasn’t blind. I was nearsighted, meaning I could see images better closer than farther. My ophthalmologist explained nearsightedness as having eyes too long to focus on an object far way. A simple solution is glasses because they offer a concave lens that bends light outward, correcting vision. As a child, I quickly accepted the social awkwardness associated with a four-eyed nerd and decided to stand out with bright, bold glasses. My first pair of glasses were lime-green and as a sophisticated college student, I’ve traded in the lime-green for a matured magenta.

Confused, I turn back to Brittani. “Why are you here? I thought you had a class at this time.”

“I do. I’m actually leaving right now. I was just checking my email before class and I stumbled across the link for SUNY Cortland’s webcam system. I watched you sitting alone in the dining hall from my Blackberry and I thought I’d visit you!” Without any further explanation, she got up and left. For the rest of my breakfast, I couldn’t shake the feeling that someone was watching me. I look up at the clock, 9:45 a.m. “Ah!” I exclaim, “I’m going to be late.” I quickly throw away my trash and recycle the *New York Times*, leaving the front page exposed.

The popular iPod may be doing more harm than good, especially to the hearing of the user, doctors say. According to Christine Albertus, an audiologist with the Marshfield Clinic in Marshfield, Wisconsin, iPod users should limit their use of the device to two hours or less per day. (Betanews)

I should have skipped Spanish class. As I sit there listening to students mispronounce the entire vocabulary list, I try to pass the time by counting down the days until I’ll see my boyfriend again. After three months and twelve days, I stopped counting. For homework, I have to create an account on VHL Central, an online version of the Spanish textbook. After class, I quickly walk to the computer lab. I sign onto a computer and open the Spanish supersite webpage. It takes five minutes for the site to load and another five minutes to successfully set up an account. Before I can make a username and password, I have to fill in my name, gender, age, address, birth date, telephone number and email address. I then decide to play a few games on Facebook. A few minutes later, I shut down the computer and mentally prepare myself for my next class, Communications: Law and Ethics. As I’m leaving I notice that someone has forgotten to sign off a computer. I look around for the computer user, but the room is empty. I turn to the computer screen and realize it is frozen on a Yahoo: Technology page; I shut down the computer.
Many of the most popular applications, or "apps," on the social-networking site Facebook Inc. have been transmitting identifying information—in effect, providing access to people's names and, in some cases, their friends' names—to dozens of advertising and Internet tracking companies, a Wall Street Journal investigation has found. (Wall Street Journal)

My professor for Communication: Law and Ethics is technologically illiterate. I watch as my classmates turn on the television and hide the remote control. Normally, I would disapprove of this immature behavior, but without my glasses I won’t be able to see the chalkboard or take decent notes. The more time wasted, the better. When the teacher finally arrives, he fiddles with the television for twenty minutes before unplugging the monitor. While the class watches in amusement, I listen to an unsettling news story broadcasted on ABC.

A woman is dead after a crash in southeast Houston, and investigators believe she may have been texting and driving. Police say Cindy Alvarez lost control of her car at Long Drive and Chaffin early Sunday morning and hit some metal poles. She died at the scene. Authorities say her phone was found between her legs. (ABC)

After class, I walk back to my room and change into comfortable clothing, sweat pants and a sweatshirt. I still cannot find my glasses and I'm beginning to get worried. I'm also hungry. I had had a difficult time ordering lunch because I could not read the small print on the electronic menu.

Depending on the material of the frame and the strength of a lens, glasses can be priced as low as $300; I cannot afford another pair.

I turn on the television and begin to surf the channels, but I am having a difficult time making out the images on the television screen. Irritated, I shut off the television during an advertisement for E!'s reality show, “Bridalplasty.”

One part "Bridezillas," another part "Extreme Makeover," E!'s new reality T.V. Series "Bridalplasty" pits brides-to-be against each other in a competition for nose jobs, implants, liposuction and the ultimate prize: a celebrity-worthy dream wedding. (ABC)

As I lay back down in my bed, defeated, I notice my glasses lying on the windowsill. A wave of relief washes over me. I sit upright, put my glasses on, and my vision instantly becomes clear. As I begin texting Brittani the good news, I jump out of bed and start walking to the bathroom. Somehow, I misjudge the distance between my bed and the bathroom and slam face-first into the bathroom door. Laughing, I realize I have learned one thing from today: even with my glasses, I am still blind.

Works Cited


<http://www.cortlandasc.com/neubig-dining-webcam.cfm>
Narcissistic Personality Disorder in Willa Cather’s “Paul’s Case”

Willa Cather’s “Paul’s Case: A Study in Temperament” (1905) invites the reader to wonder, “What really is Paul’s case?” Cather provides us with ample clues and descriptions of Paul’s temperament with remarkable detail and insight into the human psyche considering that she had no formal background in psychology and that she was writing when Sigmund Freud was just beginning to publish his theories and was therefore writing by intuitive observation rather than by using a scientific approach. Because “Paul’s Case” is written much like a descriptive analysis or case study in a patient's temperament, the reader is left with several details about Paul that are mysterious and psychiatrically and medically unexplained. The lack of a diagnosis for Paul has led many critics to develop their own diagnosis – some say Paul is a stereotypical homosexual, has Asperger’s Syndrome or Autism, or that he has a combination of depression and anxiety. In my opinion, however, the most likely diagnosis for Paul is that he suffers from Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

According to the DSM-IV, people with Narcissistic Personality Disorder are “preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love” (Criterion 2) and believe that they are “‘special’ and unique and can only be understood by, or should be associated with, other special or high-status people” (Criterion 3). Paul’s clothing gives us our first clue to his narcissistic attitudes about himself; in Cather’s description of Paul’s dress, it is apparent that Paul is attempting to rise above his lower-class status by mimicking the upper class’ appearance. The collar of Paul’s overcoat is velvet, and “there was something of the dandy about him, and he wore an opal pin in his neatly knotted four-in-hand, and a red carnation in his buttonhole” (685). According to the DSM-IV, narcissistic people typically “ruminate about 'long overdue' admiration and privilege and compare themselves favorably with famous or privileged people” (714). They also have a strong sense of entitlement, and “begrudge others of their success or possessions, feeling that they better deserve those achievements, admirations, or privileges” (715). Paul evidently has the desire to be a part of the privileged upper-class, or at least play the role, perhaps because it makes him feel more comfortable to be luxurious, or perhaps because he enjoys being “special, or unique” (714) in comparison to those around him.

Also related is Criterion 1, which states that people with Narcissistic Personality Disorder have “a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements)” (717). Paul certainly feels superior to his living situation with his father on Cordelia Street. Paul never goes home “without a shudder of loathing,” because he had an overwhelming sensation, every time he approached the street, of “sinking back forever into ugliness and commonness” (688). He preferred a neighboring street that was respectable, and filled with businessmen and large families with children who went to Sabbath school and were interested in arithmetic (688).
Paul’s inner conflict as a person suffering from Narcissistic personality Disorder is his intense dissatisfaction with his common lifestyle and a strong desire for and a sense of entitlement to a more lavish one. This dilemma fits perfectly with Criterion 5, which states that people with Narcissistic Personality Disorder have “a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations” (717).

Because life does not meet Paul’s lavish expectations, he seeks them himself. He escapes his “flavorless, colorless mass of everyday existence” (688) on Cordelia Street and takes a train to New York City, a symbol of ultimate glamour and sophistication, and a place of acceptance of the unorthodox and fantastical. He takes refuge from a snow storm inside a grand hotel where the environment is as luxurious and as aesthetically pleasing as he had always wanted his life to be. Having plenty of money that he stole from his father’s account, Paul chooses the most high-end hotel in the city: the Waldorf. There, he is surrounded by the sights, sounds and smells that only the privileged are able to experience. Paul reminds himself that the people in the Waldorf are “his own people” (693). And as he explores the inside of the Waldorf, it is as if “he were exploring the chambers of an enchanted palace, built and peopled for him alone” (693). Paul is definitely experiencing some delusions of grandeur here, as he thinks that he is inherently superior to the rest of the population and belongs in the upper crust, and the fact that he thinks all the pleasures surrounding him are meant especially for him is a sure sign of narcissism.

Criterion 4 states that a person with Narcissistic Personality Disorder “requires excessive admiration” (717), which explains why Paul takes so much delight in his job as an usher at his local theater; “He was a model usher; gracious and smiling he ran up and down the aisles; nothing was too much trouble for him; he carried messages and brought programs as though it were his greatest pleasure in life; and all the people in his section thought him a charming boy...It was very much as though this were a great reception and Paul were the host” (686-687). Though Paul does not wish to become an actor, he performs his duties so thoroughly and theatrically that it is clear that Paul loves to be the center of attention and in social situations in which he receives a lot of praise for performance.

Criterion 9 of the DSM-IV’s description of Narcissistic Personality Disorder cites that people with this disorder are arrogant and show “haughty behaviors or attitudes” (717). The faculty who are present at Paul’s hearing for his misdemeanors find the carnation in his buttonhole to be “not properly significant of the contrite spirit befitting a boy under the ban of suspension” (685). In other words, the faculty takes the carnation as a sign of Paul’s arrogance and his contempt for them and the entire situation, and they are offended that Paul is not more regretful of his ill behavior. In addition to arrogance and haughtiness, people with Narcissistic Personality Disorder “often display snobbish, disdainful, or patronizing attitudes” (715). All of these Criterion 9 characteristics are evident in Paul’s classroom behavior: “In one class he habitually sat with his hand shielding his eyes...in another, he made a running commentary on the lecture, with humorous intention” (685). Paul’s shielding of the eyes clearly indicates that he is arrogant enough to blatantly ignore his teacher. This behavior also symbolizes Paul’s attempt to dissociate himself from the average people where he lives that he devalues. And turning his teacher’s lecture into a comical mockery is a definite example of his patronizing attitude and behavior.

In a sense, this arrogance and patronization can be directly related to the lack of empathy among narcissistic people. Criterion 7 cites that people with Narcissistic Personality Disorder “have difficulty recognizing the desires, subjective experiences, and feelings of others...and are often contemptuous and impatient of others who talk about their own problems and concerns” (715). Paul is certainly impatient and contemptuous during the hearing, most likely because he is emotionally unable to understand why his teachers are upset with him or the seriousness of the situation in the first place. In his mind, there is a great divide between his concerns and the concerns of others, so Paul disregards the concerns of others and maintains his haughty attitude throughout the hearing by smiling and toying with the buttons of his coat (685).
Because of his lack of empathy for others, Paul is able to take advantage of people because he is only interested in his self-gain. Criterion 6 states that a person with Narcissistic Personality Disorder is “interpersonally exploitive, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends” (717). During Paul’s hearing, he tells the faculty members a lie when he states that he wants to come back to school. Apparently, “Paul was quite accustomed to lying; found it, indeed, indispensable for overcoming friction” (685). Later, Paul abuses his privilege of helping his father handle his bank deposits, and steals the money from his father’s account. Paul uses the money for his extravagant trip to New York City.

There are some critics, like Larry Rubin, who argue that Cather’s short story contains a strong homosexual motif throughout. This is undoubtedly a valid hypothesis if we look at Paul’s especially flamboyant behavior and appearance (the red carnation, his love of theater and the arts, his fascination with the female soprano who we may interpret to be not a love interest but an example of feminine beauty that Paul aspires to, and his relationships with other boys). However, homosexuality is not the only “diagnosis” for all of Paul’s behaviors, and it does not sufficiently account for any of Paul’s attitudes or behaviors that have already been discussed in this paper. During his stay in the city, Paul spends some time with “a wild San Francisco boy” who has come to the city for “a little flyer.” The way that Cather describes this boy sounds as if he is gay and is looking for a partner for the weekend. The boy offers to “show Paul the night side of the town,” (694), and the two stay out until 7 o’clock in the morning. However, when they leave each other that morning, their parting is “singularly cool” (694.) Critic Larry Rubin asserts that this encounter with the San Francisco boy is undoubtedly a homosexual one. In my reading, however, there is clear evidence of the San Francisco boy’s homosexuality, but no evidence that Paul was attracted to this wild boy for sexual reasons. Rubin hypothesizes that “Paul wanted something [sexual] from his companion that the latter was unprepared to give” (130), but this interpretation is reversed. Rubin previously admits that Cather’s description of the San Francisco boy indicates his homosexuality and his intent to have sexual relations with a partner that weekend, so there is no reason that the boy would be unprepared to have sex with Paul. It seems more likely that Paul mistook the wild boy for a potentially exciting and cultured tour guide of the big city, and when the wild boy attempts something more intimate with Paul, the relationship between the two goes sour, as is evident in the elevator when they leave each other.

Cather’s writing about Paul is remarkable because of its intuitive insight into human behavior, especially considering that Cather was writing about a social disorder that had not yet been identified or studied. Despite the lack of knowledge about Narcissistic Personality Disorder when Cather wrote this short story, she provides readers with plenty of details to diagnose the boy themselves. Narcissism is the only diagnosis that can explain all of Paul’s attitudes and behaviors, and that is why it is the disorder that he must be suffering from.

Works Cited


Amie Whitlock

September 13

The tag on her lab coat read “Mirabel,” just the first name, and then underneath it, “Primatologist.” She looked like a Mirabel, with her curly carrot-orange hair scrunched up loftily, framing her pale, round face. Her voice, heavily wrought with hard-edged sarcasm, belied her appearance, however.

“Can I help you?”

Jack stuttered for a moment, taken aback by her rather rude greeting. He supposed he had been staring; he never realized it when he was doing it, and had on innumerable occasions received raised eyebrows or pointedly widened eyes from his stare-ees.

“I have a — uh — I have a sample here and I was wondering if you’d take a look at it. My professors recommended you.”

Mirabel took the sealed container from him, light green eyes glaring. Her freckles looked like they were going to jump off of her face and bite him. She sighed heavily.

“What is it?”

“I don’t know,” Jack replied, feeling his face flush. He definitely didn’t. His professors didn’t either, though, and that boggled his mind. Leading primatologists at a leading university, and they couldn’t identify a simple mammal.

Mirabel donned a pair of gloves, pushing up her sleeves. She didn’t have time for this disruption; she was too busy. Especially from an undergraduate student; all brains and no charm, with his big blue eyes goggling at her and his messy hair flying all about his awkward head. She opened the sealed plastic container, and reached in. There was a soft yellow bundle inside, sprinkled with fragments of dry leaves. It smelled earthy and faintly rank, like mushrooms. Mirabel pulled the bundle out gingerly and set it on an empty lab table. She unrolled the dusty cloth, and uncovered the body of a dead animal. At first glance, it looked to be a primate, but its teeth were wrong, some-how. Sharp and pointed, they intermeshed like crocodile teeth, locking a lipless mouth. It’s skin was like leather, hard and gray; and erupting along each side of the spine with bony plates. It looks like a dinosaur, thought Mirabel. It’s still an infant. Its eyes were still closed - a live birth; characteristic of a mammal. But Mirabel had never seen a mammal like this.

“Where did you get this?” Her eyebrows were furrowed with what Jack could only assume was puzzlement.

“Found it under my porch-step a few days ago, thirty miles west of here, over in Pitcher. My kid brother plays under there all the time, but I never saw it there before.”

“I’ve never seen anything like it. Did you find it buried?”

Jack paused.

“When I found it, it was still alive.”
September 11

Jason liked to play outside, under the porch. He had gone outside this morning, a Saturday, clad in a bright blue baseball tee and brown corduroy pants. “Fitting for the chilly weather,” she had said to him. “And wear your jacket.”

"Ma," he had whined, pushing her soft hands away.

“I want you back here before your father gets home. Capiche?”

“Yeah. Can I go?” Jason scowled.

“Go on.” Jason grinned, suddenly excited, as he ran into the woods.

“Bye, Mom!” he waved.

He followed his old footpath down the dry creek bed, jumping over the pools of water that collected in the low spots. The air smelled like fungus. In a bit of dry clay under a mossy log, Jason saw a track he’d never seen before. Sitting down indian-style in the mud, he pulled his wildlife book from his backpack.

“Footprints, footprints.” He said aloud, as he flipped through the worn volume. “Footprints. Five toes, go to number three.” He flipped the page and continued to read. “Raccoons, opossums, muskrats, otters… four inches?” Jason frowned, and held his hand next to the track. It had to be twice that, maybe more. He flipped through the next few pages. It wasn’t even in the book. “Damn old crappy book.” Jason followed the tracks further down the creek bed, and turned down a deer trail when they disappeared. Here and there, he found another track in the soft mud like a long, slender hand, with dents in the mud at the end of each finger. He was suddenly reminded of his mother’s friend, Cathy Klipp, with her bony hands and long, neon acrylic nails.

“Mrs. Klipp!” he called. Jason thought she might be hiding from Mr. Klipp in the woods; she was always telling his mother what a rat-bastard he was over the phone, while Jason listened silently on the other line. Jason wasn’t sure what the difference was between a rat-bastard and just a regular bastard, but it sounded awfully serious.

“Mrs. Klippii-pp! Mrs. Kli —” Jason stopped in mid-word as he looked up into a giant cherry tree. The biggest wasp’s nest he had ever seen took up nearly the entire crown of the sprawling hardwood. He listened, but didn’t hear any buzzing sounds. Quietly and cautiously, he climbed the tree, until he was right below the bulb of the nest. He placed an ear against it, expecting the malignant hum of innumerable wasps. What he heard was altogether different, and more disturbing. A rising whoosh and an ebb, like the passing of a wave. Swell, and fall. Like breathing. Jason listened. There were probably aliens in there, and this was their hideout. He had to get a better look, and then he could report it to the FBI. Or the CIA, he wasn’t sure which. Clinging to the tree with one hand, he pulled his swiss army knife from his pocket with the other. Gingerly, he began to cut a hole, as big around as his head, through the bottom. Just as he was about to cut through the last inch of the circular incision, the papery porthole collapsed and something fell out. Reflexively, Jason caught the thing, releasing the tree and tumbling to the ground. He was lucky he hadn’t stabbed himself with the knife, he thought as he stood up. When he looked down at the thing that had fallen out of the nest, he almost screamed. Wrapped in a papery papoose was the ugliest baby monkey he’d ever seen. Grotesque bulging eyes set close in a leathery face that seemed to be composed mostly of teeth. Overlapping keratinous plates along its back brought to mind dragons and evil alien invaders. He imagined fearfully that the hive was filled with grown-up ones. He couldn’t put it back without waking up the wasp-monkeys. Jason panicked. Tucking the baby monkey into his backpack, he ran home as fast as he could and hid it under the porch step, wrapped in a tablecloth.
September 13

“Well, it’s definitely carnivorous.”
“Thank you. I couldn’t tell.” Jack was becoming irritated by this haughty grad student.
He hadn't asked to come visit her.
“It has to be a deformity. It looks almost reptilian; see? Look at those plates.”
“Look at the eyes. It’s nocturnal.”
“All mammals have large eyes when they’re born.”
“Well, okay then.” Today was not Jack’s day. He had been snubbed, and couldn’t even think of a good retort. “It looks kind of like a cross between an alligator and a monkey.”
“The skeletal structure is very characteristic of a primate.” Mirabel frowned.
“I can’t find accounts of anything like it anywhere in the library databases.”
"I've certainly never read about it.” Mirabel was feeling uneasy. "I'll put it on ice. Meet me here tomorrow at seven-thirty, we'll perform an autopsy. It's too late to do it now."

September 11

Deep in the forest, in a papery gray nest, seven creatures with no names awoke to find the patchy spot of sun filtering through the nest's entry hole fading. Dusk was approaching. One after another, as sinuously as any snake, they climbed out of the den and out onto the hulking limbs of the ancient cherry tree. The seven guardians stretched and keened and paced as they waited for nightfall, whispering amongst themselves. Suddenly, a high shriek pealed from inside the nest, and an eighth creature, eyes livid, leapt to the topmost branch, clicking and keening frantically. The others began to shriek too, and raised their faces to the night, sniffing the air for their lost pup. Elsewhere in the forest, high shrieks of alarm rose from other nests.

September 14

Jack fumbled for his cell phone, which was playing the opening chords of Purple Haze in a digital abomination of the original. It was better than an alarm clock, anyway. Slumping out of bed, he slid into yesterday’s jeans and slouched into the kitchen. He put some hot wings in the microwave and brushed his teeth. It was a Saturday, and he had an autopsy at seven-thirty. He ate his unevenly reheated hot wings hastily, wiping hot sauce off of his stubbly chin, and put on a t-shirt as he left the apartment, locking the door behind him.

Mirabel was waiting, wearing the lab coat with the lapel pin like yesterday, over slacks and heels. Jack could see that she was fussy, and had a sudden urge to push her buttons.
“You're late.” She said, in a singsong voice.
“It’s Saturday. I have a social life.”
Mirabel pursed her lips, but didn’t reply. She turned and walked briskly toward the refrigeration unit, Jack following her. She handed him a clipboard as she retrieved the chilly box.
“Sign in.”
Jack did, as Mirabel laid out her autopsy tools on the laboratory table. Distilled water, scalpel, tweezers, nippers, tray, T-pins.
“Do you want me to help?” Jack felt stupid just standing there, while Mirabel did all the work.
“You can help me by giving me a little more room.” She smiled at him sarcastically through her facemask. “What did you have for breakfast, anyway?” Jack fished for the gum in his pocket, heat rising to his cheekbones.
Mirabel made an incision from the bottom jaw all the way down the center of the body, and used nippers to open the ribcage. Jack craned from several feet away, curious about the mysterious creature’s anatomy.
“Heart, lungs, liver — spleen, pancreas. Kidney, aaaaannnd — kidney.” She pushed the tiny organs around inside the body cavity with a pale, gloved finger. “It’s a female.”

“Anything weird?”

“Not really. Probably died of exposure. Mammalian infants have to be kept warm. This one’s only a few days old; way too young to be without mommy.”

The idea of the grotesque creature having something so mundane as a “mommy” made Jack snicker. Mirabel ignored him.

“I don’t know what it is, but it has many of the hallmarks of a primate. If I’m right, somewhere in Pitcher, this one’s mommy is pretty upset.”

September 13th

“Jason! Jason, dinner’s ready!” Debbie Swarthaus was a large woman, a former opera singer with the pipes to prove it. Her boy was not as large as she was. Jason was as skinny as could be, despite his mother’s affinity for all things confectionary.

Now, as Miss Swarthaus thundered through the bushes behind the house (The porch had proved unoccupied), she caught a glimpse of his red jacket, darting behind a wide dark cherry tree. She leapt for it, being surprisingly nimble on her feet despite her bulk, grabbing hold of the coat.

“Jason, you naughty boy, don’t you hide from me, now,” She said, half scolding. She pulled on the jacket and rounded the other side of the tree.

Jason was not behind the tree. He was nowhere in sight. Miss Swarthaus held in her meaty fist what remained of Jason’s jacket, shredded by what looked like a paper shredder. A blot of blood darkened the elbow. Miss Swarthaus was silent for a moment. She tried to call Jason’s name, but instead she began to scream. It was an unnatural scream, a scream that can only come from a mother whose child has been taken by something she cannot explain. The scream carried all the way into town, a full mile and a half away.

September 14

Mirabel slid her cell phone open with one trembling hand. She typed in Gale’s number, twice dialing incorrectly before reaching him at last.

“You’ve reached Doctor Dan Gale, PhD. I’m not available right now, but if you leave your number and a brief message after the beep, I’ll get back to you as soon as I can.”

EEEEEP.

“Gale! I know you’re there. Pick up; it’s Mirabel. I found out where they settled. They’re —” Mirabel heard a rattle on the other line; she knew he’d picked up.

“Clam up, Dougherty; what do you think this is, your diary?” Harper sounded slightly panicked. Mirabel smiled.

“It’s too late, Gale. They’re breeding in the forest.” There was silence on the other line. After a few seconds, Mirabel opened her mouth to elaborate, when Daniel Gale finally spoke.

“That’s impossible.” He sounded very worried, however.

“I have a dead infant in the refrigerator in my office.” She spoke the last with a note of threat in her voice.

“Get rid of it.”

“I can’t get rid of all the evidence, Gale.”

She heard a whoosh of static as he sighed into the mouthpiece.

“I have to think. I’ll call you back in the morning.”

Mirabel opened her mouth to protest, but her old colleague had already hung up.
In his home office, Dan Gale ran his hand through his hair nervously. His stomach felt as if it had been topped off with writhing eels. Damn it. Damn it! He thought. How could this have gone so horribly wrong? He pulled heaps of textbooks and binders of scholarly journals from the shelves and pulled a tattered laboratory notebook from where it had been hidden behind them. He began to reread the notebook, starting with the escape and working backwards.

April 17, 2017

All subjects have disappeared from their confinements. Locks appear untampered with, and the structural integrity of the subjects’ cells is sound. Security cameras, though working properly, did not record any technicians’ entry or exit.

Harper flipped back through the notebook. The last several hundred pages were strictly behavioral observations. As he neared the beginning of the experimental procedures, the notebook took on a more formulaic approach.

January 2, 2012

Embryonic nuclear electroporation and suffusion:
Allelomorphs 173A, 17-23B, 184B, 193FA- chromosome 1
Allelomorphs 21CF, 176N, 219C-1D- chromosome 2...

Lists of chromosomes built from individual genes followed, spanning the next three pages. Sticking a finger in the pages to mark the entry, he flipped even further backwards into the experiment.

November 22, 2011

Allelomorph inventory: . . .

A list of the stock genes he had used to build his primate filled the next several pages. Strolling to the bookshelf, he pulled a catalog stock list from the shelf. He pored over the catalog, comparing the allelomorph codes to those he had suffused into the embryos. Goat genes, crocodile genes, chimp genes...

After more than three hours of comparing the tiny printed numbers, Gale noticed an error. At first, he thought he was merely suffering from eye strain, but after removing his glasses, rubbing his eyes, and replacing them, he could only conclude that he had ordered, and subsequently used, the wrong allelomorph. Tracing his finger across the table, he was finally able to see the source of the subjects’ high intelligence. A large part of the subjects’ brains had been engineered using allelomorphs not from gorillas as he had thought. Suddenly feeling sick, Doctor Dan Gale slammed the notebook shut and began to pace the room.
September 15

Safely back in her apartment, Mirabel switched on the television. A reality show was on, but as she had no desire to watch assorted bimbos compete for a prize whilst neck deep in snakes, she flipped the channel to the local news. A young tow-headed boy with pink cheeks was featured beneath the headline “Missing” while a crisply dressed reporter covered the story.

“— may go up as early as next week. In local news, an eleven year old boy has disappeared from the woods behind his suburban home in Pitcher, New York. Jason Swarthaus was last seen by his mother, Deborah, on the morning of the thirteenth. Anyone who has information about Jason’s whereabouts should call the local police station at the number at the bottom of the screen. More at eleven. We’ll be back after the break with your local weather fore —”

Mirabel turned off the television and began to pace. What would be the price of her silence? Would a young boy have to die before she decided to go to the police? Would they even believe her story? Or would they dismiss it as the ramblings of a genius gone round the bend? She grabbed her phone, hesitating, and then slid it open. She began to dial the police station when someone knocked hard on the door. She dropped the phone and gave a short shriek of surprise.

“Dougherty! Open the door!” His voice was muffled even through the thin door of her apartment.

Regaining her composure, she let him in. Though she had changed into a pair of her old college sweats and a ratty t-shirt, Gale looked far worse for the wear. His button-down shirt and pants were wrinkled, and his chin was stubbly. He had a wild, haggard look and his eyes were puffy.

“Jesus; you look like hell,” she said, surprised by her own candor. Gale ignored her.

“I made a mistake, Dougherty. They weren’t supposed to be able to understand us.”

“They — what?”

“It was supposed to be 125G, I ordered 125H by mistake,” He looked at her searchingly, as though pleading for her forgiveness.

“Gale, what the hell are you talking about?”

“Gorilla genes! They were supposed to be gorilla genes!”

Mirabel hesitated, thinking back to the years of painstaking research in the lab.

“What were they?”

He didn’t answer, but the look he gave her told her all she needed to know.

“Oh, no.”

September 13

Deep in the forest, seven guardians crouched in the spreading canopy of the cherry tree. As they stood sentinel, they scraped marrow from slick femurs, while inside the nest, the female creature fed fresh meat to her pups.

The End
Bullying
Lauren Menchini

It was just about time for our fifteen-minute break. As I was helping “Kayla” (my 9 year old mentee) finish her homework, she paused to talk to her friend “Melinda.” Kayla began telling her about what had happened at recess today. I stopped what I was doing and intently listened to their conversation. “Melinda, I really wanted to play jump rope today, but the cool girls wouldn’t let me join in,” remarked an extremely upset Kayla. Melinda replied, “You know we’re never allowed to play with them because we aren’t cool like them. They never include us because we don’t fit in with them and they don’t like us.” My eyes darted to Kayla. I was caught so off guard, and instantly I felt like a concerned mother. “Kayla, what happened and who are these girls?” I asked. Kayla refused to say anymore. Her face lost any trace of color it had, and her eyes became dreary at the thought of being a bully victim.

Authors Marini et al. (2006) define bullying as a form of hostility found among peers (p.551). Fleming et al. (2009) associate bullying with side effects such as depression, anger, resentment, anxiety, shattered self-esteem, and antisocial behavior (p.131). For example, one night for homework Kayla had to find five words in the dictionary that best described herself. For ten minutes she sat and stared at the pages. I said, “Kayla, what about ‘smart,’ ‘intelligent,’ and ‘beautiful?’” But she frowned and lowered her eyes to the floor. I was later informed that at the Youth Assist Program, in which I volunteer (Cortland, N.Y.), all 28 of the youths from the ages of nine to seventeen are bullied. This program is designed to provide the youths with a haven. Kirsty Scott (2010) claimed that such programs are vital because they help youths manage with social and emotional setbacks, which often go unseen in the school (Scott, 2010). In “The bully as victim?,” author Gillian Patterson (2005) claims “one in four primary school pupils are bullied,” and the harassment ranges from direct physical bullying (such as shoving, kicking, and hitting) to indirect bullying, which in Kayla’s situation includes social exclusion, rumors, and made up tales (p. 27).
The high levels of depression that arise from being bullied can do serious damage to a youth’s psychosocial emotions, which are his or her feelings that come about after psychological/social interactions with others. Authors Marini et al. (2006) say that damaged psychosocial emotions can range from social anxiety, depression, poor self-esteem, bad temperament, and unbalanced peer relations (p. 551). These psychosocial changes in children’s activity levels (such as socially excluding themselves from activities involving others) and emotions have been linked by Marini et al. to bullying “because they limit children’s ability to self-regulate impulsive, inappropriate behavior” (p. 553).

Based on T. Buggey’s (2007) observations, the chart below represents Marini et al.’s study of the impact of psychosocial emotions, and shows that bully victims had higher rates of depression than non-bullied youths, and bullied youths had lower levels of self-esteem than non-bullied youths (Diagram). Patterson (2005) states, “children who experience chronic stressors such as disability, socio-economic deprivation, long-term parental arguing and repeated abuse” are likely to suffer the side effect of depression from bullying (p. 28), which means that the young boys and girls are likely to get picked on for being poor and for having learning disabilities which I’ve seen and heard about at the Youth Assist Program. Youths who are victims of negative social environments (bullies) don’t know how to regulate their actions and behaviors because they have been so physically and verbally attacked by others. They no longer know if who they are and what they do is considered acceptable by the “cooler kids.” This growing vulnerability in bully victims has become a global phenomenon.

Lila C. Fleming and Kathy H. Jacobsen (2009) conducted a study in Chile to better understand the relationship between bullying and the symptoms of depression (p. 130). This study was the first ever to examine bullying and its symptoms of depression in South America. The Chilean study was focused on youths from low or middle range incomes, which Fleming and Jacobsen saw as a factor relating to bullying. After reviewing the Chilean students responses, Fleming and Jacobsen concluded that students who had claimed that they were being bullied due to socio-economic deprivation, were more likely to be depressed and lack a group of close friends (p. 133). Here in Cortland County, many of the children who attend Youth Assist Program (YAP) are from lower income families which makes them susceptible to bullying. I have heard the children at YAP say that they feel picked on if their clothes aren’t nice like those of other kids in their class, or that they had to buy their Halloween costume from a thrift store instead of getting a newly packaged one at Party City. It is upsetting to see how society has grown so accustomed to judging others by their material aspects, which only continues to widen the gap between class levels.
Being socially excluded by others leads to the youths having no strong peer connections, and they begin to feel lost. Author Gillian Patterson (2005) stated that this feeling of hopelessness is just another sign of depression (p. 28). I had seen this in Kayla: she had been socially excluded at recess games. This sparked her call for help and guidance from the Youth Assist Program.

As YAP provides aid for bullying victims in Cortland County, the Committee for Children offers the same support, except on a larger, global level in countries from Japan to Slovakia. This international organization reaches out to children in hopes of preventing bullying, violence, and child abuse. Their program, Second Step, was formed to diminish bullying, and to help create a safer environment for children and relieve them from this burden (Committee for Children).

MEEDUCO (Mind, Education and Heart), a program partner of Committee for Children, translates and assimilates the program teachings into Chilean schools and culture. Chileans refer to this program as Paso Adelante Chile, or Step Ahead Chile. Step Ahead Chile carries out the prevention of bullying and aims to help children live in more peaceful harmony. Like Fleming and Jacobsen’s study, Step Ahead Chile researched Chilean bullying, but instead of studying students who had not been participants in a program that addressed bullying, they studied students who had been participating in their bullying prevention program. Their results showed that when comparing students who participated in the program to those who did not, “78% improved their social skills, 42% showed to be less aggressive, 37% were more apt to choose positive social goals, and the students needed 41% less adult intervention to resolve conflicts” (Step Ahead). This being said, it is important to give bully victims proper aid and mentoring because as Step Ahead Chile demonstrated, aid leads to positive results from the youths.

Kayla is a beautiful, smart, and unique young girl. Every Tuesday for two and a half hours, I make it my goal to help her see that she is all those things plus many more. It kills me to witness how bullying has made her become sensitive and defenseless. A nine-year old girl should never have to hesitate to be herself. As a proud member of the Youth Assist Program, I want to be able to help Kayla recognize all the great things she has to offer, and help lift the victimization off of her shoulders.

Works Cited


I Feel It in My Teeth, and Hers, and Hers Too

James Reardon

My mother’s smile is white as the picket fence from a Norman Rockwell painting, and she blazes it at my daughter as we enter her house. It’s late, and I just drove four hours after working all day to bring my daughter by for a weekend visit. Mom never fails to give my daughter such a smile when she arrives. It’s a much better smile than any smile my mother gave me at that age. She raised me as a single mother; I am her eldest, youngest, and best all rolled into one. Still, I never got a smile like that. My mother did a lot for me, even though I always wanted impossibly more. My father was never around when I was growing up, so I had to extract everything I needed from a parent out of her. Her parenting seemed to my naiveté agonizingly deficient in ways I couldn’t express in childhood. Yet even though she was cursed with a resentful ingrate for a son, she smiled a lot. I understood much better why she smiled after my daughter was born. Truth told, however, that my mother’s smiles from my youth were enough to make small children cry, and wracked with sobs they would beg my mother to purse her lips, lest her grotesque, gnarled, nicotine-stained teeth haunt those innocent toddlers’ nightmares for all time.

I remember always having to brush my teeth growing up. Every night before bed, in a bathroom so small I couldn’t lie flat on its floor as an adult, I would manipulate that vinyl tube until a tiny, iridescent glob made its way onto my toothbrush. Some months it went on a Kermit the Frog toothbrush. A few weeks later, the gelatinous teardrop of gel would go onto a Scooby-Doo toothbrush. But every night it went onto the bristles, and into my too-smart-for-its-own-good mouth the brush, bristles, and blob of toothpaste went. A scrub by the molars, a polish for the incisors, and away down the drain went my tiny mouthful.

“Did you brush?” my mother would shout down the six-foot hall from the living room.
“Yeah, Mom, geez, I brushed.”
“You’d better,” she’d say ominously, puffing away on her never-ending supply of Virginia Slims. “You don’t want teeth like mine.”
“Mom, there’s no way I’m gonna have teeth like yours.” I’d have to smoke a half-pack a day to even get the color right.
“Oh no?” she’d respond, and exhale a thin stream of smoke down the hallway. “Just you wait.” And the smell of low-tar cigarette exhaust and her perplexing threat would follow me into my bedroom, over the carpet with its top layer of Legos, and into my soft, cold bed.

I remember my mother coming to pick me up after grade school one fall day from my cousins’ house. “You have to be nice to me today,” my mother told me.
“Why?” I asked, always needing a reason to justify such a ridiculous demand.
“I had four root canals this afternoon.”
“Four? How long did that take?”
“A couple hours.” Her voice was uneven, and she seemed out of breath.
“They let you go from work?”
“I took a half-day.”
She got a half-day off work and I was supposed to be nice to her? Why are things never fair for kids? I asked myself. Wait ‘til I’m the grown-up.
“Does it hurt?”
My mother made a weird guffawing sound and looked at me like I was the one stupid enough to neglect my teeth for the better part of my life. “Yeah it hurts.” And then impatiently, in a single gasp: “C’mon; get in the car.”
Then there was a day in high school when she and I were eating a rare meal together at home. It was sunny out, and I stared out the window directly across from my place at the dinner table. I couldn’t tell you what we were eating, but I’m sure now it was soft food. I turned to say something nice to my mother – another rarity – and noticed her chewing her food slowly with a hand over her mouth for the entire duration of her mastication. What the hell is this about? I asked myself.

“Mom?”
“Hmm?” with a mouthful of food.
“Why are you eating like that?”
“Like what?”
“With your hand over your mouth like that.”
“I don’t want you to look at my mouth,” came her hesitant reply.
“Why?”

In retrospect, I think she felt close to me right then. I was taking a genuine interest in her, not treating her like the unique and persistent annoyance I saw when I looked at her. That’s probably why she foolishly answered honestly. Slowly, quietly: “Some of my teeth fell out today.” It seemed to pain her to say it, but that sure as hell didn’t soften my enthusiastic response.

―Mom?‖
―Hmm?‖ with a mouthful of food.
―Why are you eating like that?‖
―Like what?‖
―With your hand over your mouth like that.‖
―I don’t want you to look at my mouth,‖ came her hesitant reply.
―Why?‖

She called me one day at college. Miraculously I found time to let her bend my ear, and for some reason I didn’t hustle her off the phone. After a few minutes, she dropped this bomb: “I got dentures the other day.”

“What? What do you mean you got dentures?” I gripped the phone tightly, like I wanted to make sure it wouldn’t lie to me.
“Mmm, ya know,‖ she rambled, “my teeth weren’t getting any better.‖ I could hear the sucking sound of her nicotine fix over the connection.
“Jim, I’ll tell ya,” she shot back, her voice suddenly full of uncharacteristic purpose. “I went in to see my boss, you know, the young woman they hired? Well, I’m all the way across the room – and her office is big, now – and she takes one look at me and says to me ‘Ellen? Did you get dentures?’ And I said to her, (in a quiet voice now), ‘Yes, Cathy. Yes I did.’ “

You’ve been saying how dentures are for old people for years.”
“I know, I know. But it just made sense.”
“So… do people notice?” I felt like I noticed over the phone.
“Jim, I’ll tell ya,” she shot back, her voice suddenly full of uncharacteristic purpose. “I went in to see my boss, you know, the young woman they hired? Well, I’m all the way across the room – and her office is big, now – and she takes one look at me and says to me ‘Ellen? Did you get dentures?’ And I said to her, (in a quiet voice now), ‘Yes, Cathy. Yes I did.’ “

I was riveted. “So what the fuck did she say to that?” I hollered over the phone, overtaken by this story for reasons I still can’t name.
“She said, ‘They look good, Ellen. They look very, very good.’”
I was flabbergasted.
A few months later, when I finally see her, I confirm the report: her dentures did look good. I couldn’t stop staring. My mom couldn’t stop smiling.
“And get a load of this,” she tells me. “They asked me if I wanted to keep my teeth. Can you believe that?”
“Did you?” I asked, about to jump out of my chair.
“Of course not! Why?”
“I would have taken them,” I tell her in a small voice.
“What on earth would you have done with my old teeth?” She was genuinely baffled. I may as well have told her I’d like to try to get myself pregnant.
“I just always thought of them as my birthright,” I told her shyly. “I had to live with them too, you know.”

And now, when I carry my kid in my arms through the doorway, my mother sits her granddaughter at the kitchen table and offers her cookies. We laugh, all three of us, and I can’t help but stare still at my mom’s teeth, so long as she hasn’t taken them out of her mouth for the night.

Before my kid heads off to bed, I tell her, “Hey now. You ate sweets and you’re going to go straight to bed? Brush those teeth. Grandma has a toothbrush for you in the bathroom. “
Then my mother, her jaws lined with man-made teeth, calls out to me, “Oh, Jim! She’s here for a visit! Lighten up with the rules! One night of not brushing her teeth won’t kill her!”
And at once a bad father and a good son, I obey my mother and let my exhausted daughter toddle off, teeth unbrushed, to my old soft, cold bed.

The End

Cortland Professional Writing Web Site
Taylor Morris

For full site, please visit:
http://cortlandprofessionalwriting.tumblr.com/
Each year, the College Writing Committee presents awards for outstanding undergraduate and graduate student writing in five categories:

- **Academic Writing** (papers based on sources or other data)
- **Fiction** (short stories, scripts)
- **Poetry**
- **Creative Nonfiction**
- **Webpage Design** (Judges will place emphasis on writing content. Pages should contain a minimum of 500 words of written text.)

The work for these categories must have originated in a course taken at SUNY Cortland during the calendar year of the contest. For example, papers written for classes taken between January 2011 and December 2011 are eligible for the 2011 contest.

This year we are introducing a sixth category, **Personal Writing**. Entries for this category may be in any genre, and they do not have to originate in a course taken at Cortland.

First place winners receive a cash prize of $100 and have their writing published in a booklet and presented on Scholars' Day.

We encourage submissions by writers in all majors and at all levels of study. Entries may be submitted by professors or by students themselves. The contest deadline is **Wednesday, December 21, 2011**.

**Submit electronic entries only:** Entrants should not include their name on the competition paper itself. In an email message, they should indicate their name and ID number, the title of the submission, the category of the writing (e.g., academic writing, fiction, creative nonfiction), the course for which the paper was written, and the name of the course professor. Electronic copies should be in Word format.

Entrants may submit multiple submissions in one or more genres; however, each entry must be sent as a separate attachment to an email message.

Send entries to **Priscilla.harvey@cortland.edu**