

**The truth is...**we gather on the Third Monday of each month to practice our writing skills. We listen and share in each other's work. We are small in number and our commitment is strictly to produce and foster creativity among our members.

**We started** in July 1999 and consist of adults that enjoy writing memoirs, commentaries, essays, poems, and/or prose. Our simple method each month is to use a pre-selected word or phrase as the basis of a story, an idea, an opinion, a derivative of, or an implied essence of and write a 1 to 1 ½ page document. We share our stories, comment, and in that way build up our writing skills through practice and presentation. The atmosphere is friendly and supportive, and the feedback is gentle.

**Curious?** Always wanted to try writing for fun, entertainment, or even profit? Come visit with us at any of our open meetings. Bring a sample of your work. Sit in and see what we do. If you like it, join us every month and become a member.

**Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group  
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**July 2019 selection – Gypsy**

**God is Dead, Humankind has to Carry Its Own Cross  
By J. Smetana**

I told Peaches, If you see something, say something. Well I see banana peels on the dashboard of that car over there, she said. Good call Peaches! I think you're right about there being at least a half-dozen desiccated banana peels drying on the guy's sunbaked dashboard. Least I think it's a dude-owned car. Maybe the car belongs to a funky gypsy chick. Or does it belong to Donovan? Is he goin' on a drug "trip?" Man, you're losin' me with the whole Woodstock thing, said Peaches. Between you and Jerry with his Crosby, Stillls, and Nash album I think I'm trippin,' man! I hear ya Peaches. Maybe it's a chick car but I'm kinda thinkin' dude. Hey can the peaches, said Peaches, dint Jerry tell you I changed my name to Lovecakes? Since when? Since yesterday! You mean to tell me you went down to the Hall of Records and paid your fee and stood in line just to change your name to Lovecakes? Why dint you just change it to Madeleine Elster? Who? Never mind.

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## **Gypsy Wannabe** **By Carol Karvon**

I was startled by my mom sprinkling cold water on my face and asking if I was okay. At first, I didn't know where I was or why she was patting my face. I seemed to be laying on the sofa with her hovering over me. The last thing I remembered was dancing; spinning so fast my skirt was swirling around. I must have made myself dizzy and fallen down.

When I was a young girl, maybe 8 or 9, my favorite costume was a colorful poufy skirt paired with an off-the-shoulder peasant blouse. I would raid my mom's jewelry box and adorn myself with every costume necklace she had, the bigger and brighter, the better. Next came the bracelets piled high up my arms as far as they would reach. To complete my look, I put on her dangling earrings, hoping they made me look exotic and wouldn't slip off when I moved my head.

I tried to walk around in her towering high heels, but couldn't take a step without the shoes falling off my smaller feet. I had to settle for my dance class ballet slippers. They were more stable than the stiletto heels my mom favored when she dressed up.

I begged mom to buy me castanets so I could dance around and snap them in time to the music she would put on the phonograph. All she ever said, was "you have a birthday coming up soon." Soon never seemed to come. How could I be the Gypsy princess I longed to be without castanets. In my mind, Gypsy girls were all princesses.

When I begged her to put makeup on my face to finish my look, she told me I had to wait until I was older, that little girls didn't need makeup. She said putting makeup on little girls was just gilding the lily. What was that supposed to mean? I guess dressing up and playing gypsy was okay, but making up my face was not. So, I had to be patient and knew that one day, I could have my own makeup.

I loved dancing around our living room, entertaining an audience. Anyone who came to visit was treated to an impromptu dance exhibition. I'd twirl around so my many-colored skirt with several layered petticoats underneath would billow up and swirl around me. I loved pretending I was a Gypsy princess and someday my prince would ride up on a beautiful Arabian steed to rescue me from the dreary life I was born into. I would be the princess I was always meant to be. My prince would be rich and grant my every wish. I would have beautiful gowns and go to fabulous parties on his arm. People would bow to us when we entered the room. I was too young to realize that Gypsy girls didn't live like princesses. They didn't live in castles or go to fancy dress balls. Their everyday lives were probably just as routine as mine. They just seemed more mysterious and they traveled to exciting place I longed to see, or so I imagined.

Alas, this was all a dream. My everyday life was mundane and consisted of learning my lessons in school, doing homework after school, and then tending to the chores my mom assigned to me. But I wasn't alone, my siblings and friends had the same kind of lives I did. We grumbled and complained how unfair life was. My mother just smiled. We weren't to know what she was smiling about until many years later when we had our own children. She kept us busy on

purpose to keep us out of mischief, not to punish us. She was preparing us for life and making certain we were capable of facing any obstacles life put in the way. She didn't appreciate my daydreams and tried to make me see things realistically. Hard as she tried, she failed to shake the daydreams loose from where they lurked in the back of my mind. Sometimes, daydreams are what get a little girl through tough times.

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### **The Gypsy Campfire** **By N. Stewart**

Toward dusk, I perched myself on the top of the hill, surrounding me were the low branches of bushes. As I lay on the ground, I moved the leaves so I could see into the valley below. There rounded top wooden wagons stood encircled around a flaming campfire. Women dressed in colored full skirts and a variety of brightly colored peasant blouses were preparing the evening meal. Their bracelets bang together as they worked, and gold chains adorned their necks. One was kneading dough and another was chopping what looked like onions or potatoes. Over the fire meats were roasting. An old man fiddler sat on the steps of one of the wagons in front of the wagon's door, playing soulful music. The music stopped suddenly.

I felt the vibration of the hoofs, hitting the earth before I saw men ride into the camp. Getting down from their horses, they swung bulky, heavy canvas bags over their shoulders. Each man emptied the bag's contents on the ground before the campfire. The pile became higher and higher with all sorts of big and small objects.

One gypsy stood out from the crowd by the way he carried himself as he walked toward the pile, placing the contents of his bag there also. Everyone made room as he approached the campfire and I assumed him to be the leader of what I thought must be the talked about caravan of gypsies. He wore a red, gold fringed scarf on the back of his head and a big gold loop earring in one ear. He wore a black vest, colorful shirt, stripped pants, and black riding boots. He pawed through the items the others had brought. Occasionally he would hold up an item and the men would shout and clap or they would jeer. Those articles that had brought the claps and shouts would go into another, smaller pile. He pulled out gold trinkets, household items, and gold chains. When done sorting, he smartly clapped his hands and the fiddler started playing lively music. Everyone began to dance around the campfire.

The children ran to the leader as he threw a handful of coins high into the air. The children scrambled on the ground to collect as many coins as each could. The leader patted the heads of the children, then joined the men.

The merriment went on for a long time as I watched from my place of concealment under the bushes. Slowly, the women began to drift away from the campfire, returning to their cooking, leaving the men to shout, drink, and dance. As the fiddler continued to play the lively music, I found my fingers tapping the ground to its rhythm.

It was getting quite dark and I knew I couldn't stay any longer. I needed to leave and head home before my parents begin to worry about where I had gone. There was so much talk in the town about the gypsies in the valley that I had to see what they were like for myself. Watching them, they didn't seem any different from the rest of us. Only, they lived in wagons rather than houses and move where and when they want rather than stay in one place. They have a different way of living that's all. They seem peaceful enough and not as evil as the town's people had said.

I backed away as quietly as possible. I don't think anyone would have noticed me anyway as the gaiety in the valley was all consuming to its participants. I went down the hill and untied my horse, grabbed the reins and swung my leg over, and headed for home.