

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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December 2019 selection – Blanket

**What's So Special Anyway
By Carol Karvon**

When David was little, his most prized possession was a ratty tatty bit of blanket he called his "blankie". He used to drag it around everywhere with him. It was comical and heartwarming at the same time to see this little boy walking around with his blankie trailing behind him. We all watched out for him to make sure he didn't trip over the blanket.

He would run its binding between his thumb and fingers to feel its smoothness. When he was troubled, he went to his blanket for comfort. Sometimes he would lift the blanket to his face and caress his skin with the binding's cool smoothness.

Every so often Mom had to bargain with him to let go of it so it could be washed. It all started when he was a tiny tot. He had a bad cold and Mom wrapped him in the blanket and sat him on her lap. She cuddled him and read him stories until he felt better and fell asleep.

After that he rolled himself in the blanket whenever he didn't feel well. We thought he found it a magic cure-all for whatever was ailing him.

It happened one day that the blanket was so worn out and grungy mom resorted to cutting out the best part. There was one corner that had hardly any wear and also had the satin binding intact. Mom cut out a large piece of that corner and hemmed the raw edges. Davy, as we all called him, had his very own comfort blanket.

As we all grew older and got more involved with school and other activities, Davy's blankie saw less of him. It was washed, folded and retired to a drawer in his dresser. It would be handy if he needed it.

He needed it less and less but it was always there waiting for him, just in case. Sometimes he checked the drawer to make sure it was still there and mom hadn't thrown it away. Just seeing his blankie reassured him all was well in his world. It was better than having a comfort animal. He didn't have to feed or walk it. It was just there. We knew when David, as he now wants to be called, met his future wife. She was the first person he ever told about his blankie. And, we knew she was the perfect partner for him. She didn't laugh or ridicule him.

David has children of his own now and they love hearing him tell them about some of his boyhood memories and the special blanket. When they visit grandma's house, they always want to see their dad's old room and what's in the dresser drawers. They are always happy to see the blankie and learn about their dad and his childhood days.

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The Blanket **By Val Collins**

This story begins with the loving instincts of a mother to cover and protect her offspring and in this case with a blanket. I came upon a scene one pleasant spring morning while working in my mother's garden. Happily moving along the flower beds on my knees pulling weeds and tiling the soil I came to the spot where the air conditioner was protruding from the window and bushes were growing all around it. Peering under the bushes to clean the area of weeds, I was met by a pair of yellow beady eyes staring back at me, intent and unflinching. Heart racing, I instinctively jumped back, but then, with intense curiosity piqued, I dared another look. There sat a large beautiful hen with her red rust feathers blanketing a rather large mound of eggs. She sat boldly and patiently unmoved by my presence and seemingly determined to keep her unhatched chicks covered with her fine feather blanket. "Alright", I gently whispered. "I will leave you alone to tend to your brood and not bother you." I gently backed away fully excited with my discovery. Of course, I informed my mother of this news and we agreed to let this hen do her job in peace.

Every day I would go outside to check on the hen and the beautiful warm feathers that blanketed her eggs and everyday there she would be diligent in her maternal duties. I liked to think that we somewhat became friends. One day as I went out to do my routine check I was surprised to see her across the road with a rooster alongside. "Well", I mused, "I guess she is stepping out to find some food," as I did wonder how she was managing to eat. When I turned around to check on the

mound of eggs I jumped back in pure shock and horror. There neatly wrapped around the eggs was a large fat snake! I screamed for my mother to come out, yelling for her to call my brother, call the police, do something to rescue these unhatched chicks! By now the neighbors were gathering in our yard to see what the fuss was and we witnessed the snake swallowing the eggs whole. One man apparently deemed himself reporter as he announced each egg that was slowly swallowed. "There's one", he proclaimed soon to be followed by "there's two...now three." I was frantic but very soon both my brother and the police arrived to save the day. The policemen were prepared for this situation and seemed unphased by the drama that it was. They took the long pole they brought with them and deftly scooped up the snake. With the snake slung over the pole, they then slowly walked across the street to the woods that lay behind the houses there. A woman came out of her house at this point and as the policemen calmly walked past her house to deposit the snake in the woods behind it, she yelled, "Well don't bring it HERE...I said DON'T BRING IT HERE!" The policemen paid her no mind but carefully deposited the rascal snake into the woods at which point he slithered quickly away. "That snake is more afraid of you than you are of it", declared the policeman, deeming him a harmless pine snake. With the drama of the hour over and everyone back in their houses I sadly figured the hen would not return to those eggs and they would now not hatch. The next day I went outside to see the mound of uncovered eggs and there to my delighted surprise was mama hen back on top of her eggs, her feather blanket spread neatly and warmly around them! Never has a blanket been so genuinely welcomed as was that feather blanket on that day.

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Viva La Music Cubana
By J. Smetana

I was at Nookies trading barbed witticisms with Joyce Saxon when my 'phone rang. Guten Tag I answered. Yeah listen man it's Peaches, said Peaches. Listen do you got an extra BLANKET or something over there you can bring me? Peaches are you asking for a BLANKET or are you asking for something? What? Never mind. I'm coming over tonight anyways to watch BOWLING for Dollars and I'll bring along an array of blankets, a plethora, even (said like the pink mountain lion) do you mean to tell me Uncle Jerry hasn't turned on the heat yet and don't tell me let me guess that's a half empty carton of Egg Beaters in the icebox. Yeah you guessed it pretty close 'cept I'm not sure if it's half empty or half full.

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After the Blanket of Snow Fell
By N. Stewart

I uncovered my head and pulled the cover down, looking out the bedroom window. Overnight the earth was blanketed with fresh snow, crisp, white snow and all was stilled. There was a freshness to the world and I could feel a change in me. I shivered without the blanket and

hesitated for a moment, desperately wanting to pull it back over my head. But, I did not. With feet to the floor, I slowly rose, moving closer to the window. The purity of the wintery scene strengthened me, the freshness, the gentleness, the beauty of it. The trees and bushes were all covered with clinging puffs of snow. The browned dead-looking grass was gone and a thick carpet of pure, innocent white was in its place. A red cardinal sat high in a tree and sang to me. A bunny hopped out from behind a snow-covered bush, stopped in full view and scratched its ear. After the storm, life returned.

The hiding, the covering up, was over for me, too. The hurt and pain would lessen, but I needed and, now wanted to leave my self-imposed prison to openly face each day. It is so much easier to close one's eyes, completely shutting out the outside world and sleep time away. The clock moved on, but I never did. For me, everything remained the same, and I liked it that way. I assumed I couldn't handle any more than I had, but I never tried to either. I had shut down...from life. One day was identical to the next, and the next, and the one after that. There was no change, no growth, no recognition of a life passing. Every day was merely another day to wake, to struggle and, to trudge through, doing what I absolutely had to do in order to breathe. Thankfully, sleep was my best friend and offered shelter and protection each time I put my head to the pillow. No further effort on my part was necessary.

Happiness eluded me. I wouldn't allow myself to feel any warmth or good emotions. I was wallowing in all the self-inflicted painful hurt I forced myself to endure year after year. Same for love. No one was ever going to get close to me. I would not let that happen. What was the point? Sooner or later that one would leave and I'd be alone again. It wasn't worth the momentary comfort let alone the effort it takes to share feelings, wishes, desires, and dreams with one other person. In reality, I couldn't even share those intimate ideas with myself. It was far too great an effort and would only add weight to what I already carried.

This morning is different. A paradigm shift within me has taken place. I feel warmth and kindness bubbling to the surface. Strangely enough it seemed to have happened overnight with the coming of that new snow fall. When I uncovered, I felt renewed, resolved, and ready. But surely, that could not be the case. It would take more than merely waking up one morning, seeing the beauty and simplicity of a snowfall and that being the life-changing moment. All the yesterdays before, were dark and miserable, yet today I feel enlightened and unburdened. Is it that simple? Seeing from a different perspective, I am changed and now believe that I can be loved. I am changed and I am loved. I won't let that slip away. I won't give that up.

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