

**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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**January 2020 Selection – Wonder/wonderful**

**Wonder of Wonders  
By N. Stewart**

Wonder of Wonders, Miracle of Miracles I looked out the hotel window in the morning and saw falling snow. Not that that was a surprise being January, but surprising because I was in Hawaii. The flight was long and delayed many times before we finally left Chicago's O'Hare airport. Anxiety had gotten to me and I took a pill to relax as we were pulling away from the gate. I was exhausted from the trip and a little groggy by the time I finally deplaned and collected my luggage. It was dark and looking out the window, I could only see my own reflection. A yellow cab was waiting at the door of the airport and I got in. I guess after sitting down in the cab, and giving directions to the Hilton, I must have fallen asleep.

"We're here" is the next thing I heard. The hotel looked all shinny and lit up as I paid the driver and exited the cab. I had on my winter coat, but felt a windy chill creep down my back. The door man came and got my luggage out of the cab as I headed into the hotel's lobby area. I approached the front desk and asked for the room I had reserved with a view of the ocean. A look of confusion crossed her face but she politely offered a room with a water view.

The bellhop came and picked up my luggage and directed me to the elevators. I walked in and he pushed the 6<sup>th</sup> floor button. I was too tired to make conversation or ask any questions, so I tipped him and ushered him out the door of my room. To unpack or not to unpack that was a good

question. I decided that I would need some things out of my overnight case and the rest could wait until the morning. I got what I needed and got ready for bed. The sheets felt cool and silky. I puffed the pillows and I don't remember anything after that.

This morning, I stood at the window, marveling at the snow floating by. Good heavens, I thought what has happened to the world if there is snow in Hawaii. Climate change must be for real.

Stopping mid-thought, I said, "Wait a minute." I started to review what I remembered from the previous day-- *snowing at home when I left, flight delayed many times and on into the late night, pulling away from the gate, taking the pill, dozing...collecting luggage, window reflection, getting into a "Yellow" cab, the look on the clerk's face when I asked for an "ocean view," no lei around my neck, no sunshine, no palm trees, just cold and snow.* "Where am I?"

I turned on the TV and flipped channels, seeing familiar Chicago shows. I opened the hotel room door to discover a newspaper with the title staring at me. It read *The Chicago Tribune*. I'm in Chicago! I never left Chicago! I'm in a hotel in Chicago!

The next thoughts were very foggy. *I remember sitting at the gate and finally pulling away only to sit on the tarmac, waiting for takeoff. I must have fallen into a deep sleep then. I woke to the plane bumping along before coming to rest at a gate. The flight attendants were announcing something, but I didn't hear as everyone noisily started moving about, collecting items from around them and from the overhead compartment. I thought we had landed in Hawaii and got up to get my things. I remember deplaning and hearing an announcement to pick up luggage from my flight at the lower level. I remember commenting this airport must have had the same designer as O'Hare. I got in the cab and asked for the Hilton, still thinking I was in Hawaii. But I'm not. I apparently never left the city. Oh my gosh, Flight cancelled due to weather.*

The family must be frantic not knowing where I am. Where's my cell? Here it is. I never turned it back on after boarding. Look there's a zillion calls, texts, and messages.

Please, please answer.... "Honey? I'm safe and okay.... Phone was off.... Sorry.... Can you drive to the downtown Hilton? It's a long story and I will tell you over breakfast. I thought I was in Hawaii...No, Really. I'm okay – a bit fuzzy headed and rattled though. I think it was the anxiety medicine the doctor prescribed.... Okay, see you in an hour then, love you."

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### **Wonder Bread By Sara Schupack**

I can understand nostalgia for a mythical past, when there was more trust than cynicism. The imaginary era of Wonder Bread, named like a superhero. It was uniform, pure white, satisfyingly squishy. You should sculpt with it or make French toast, with its perfect absorbency. There were so many chemicals in it that it never went bad. The more chemicals the better; that was Science.

Mr. Robinson says to Benjamin, "One word: Plastic." I'm still enthralled by plastic, and all of its beautiful colors and textures. It doesn't break like glass. It makes every day feel like a picnic.

I'm sure even in this vague, fantasy past, politicians lied and dangers lurked, but you didn't fear the very people who were supposed to protect you or the ones representing the constitution that made us.

I have no longing for suburbia of matching homes and faces all as white as the bread, with homemakers industriously using all of the latest cleaning and cooking machines while hubbies worked in an office doing something important.

But I am worn out by reading a news article, unsure of what was left out, how much more is there to know, and did I even want to know. I suppose there was always some existential threat— Nuclear annihilation, The Russians or The Red Scare, so maybe worrying about the very earth dying isn't worse. Our pollutants kill species while they also corrode our insides with cancer but before we knew about that, the flu could wipe out whole populations, and then there's always the plague or the devil.

I don't think I'd enjoy Wonder Bread, but I'd like to find wonder again. It might be in my dog's complete happiness at each meal, as if it's the first. Or my son calling me up to discuss a philosophical question or a tricky grammar quandary. Maybe just a rainbow, a neighbor's smile, a cup of tea with a good book. One way or another, we must find ways to set aside fear, mistrust, and hate, and find wonder.

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### **What Is in a Bottle By Mark Moe**

I remember when I started dating Krystal a few years ago. We met at a Christmas party hosted by my brother's work at this fancy banquet hall. My brother works as a car salesman at a high-end car dealership one of only two in the city that provide car buyers with the access to buy Maclaren, Ferrari and Lamborghini to the citizens of Boston. My brother was excited for me to meet his new girlfriend, Amber. She had invited one of her best friends, Krystal to come along to help her network with people and of course to have a friendly female presence in case she got separated from her new boyfriend, my brother. When I first saw her, I remember hearing the song Dreamweaver playing through my head and how time seemed to move in slow motion. She was blonde-haired with a short but not too short haircut, a very athletic build, notably tall at least 5'9 even without the heels and beautiful brown eyes. She wore one of those sparkling party dresses in a pretty blue shade with matching heels.

After being introduced, we hit it off immediately and talked throughout the evening. I was glad for the company because I had come to the party alone and mostly just at my brother's request so that he could introduce Amber to me. I normally do not go to these parties, because my job is

nowhere near as glamorous as my brother. I am one of the lead Zookeepers at the Franklin Park Zoo in Boston. I have always loved animals and made it my career to care for them. I was also surprised that Krystal would even talk to me, considering that I am a 6'0 white guy with brown hair and over three hundred pounds and none of it is solid muscle. Krystal had just been accepted into the Fashion Institute of Boston as a new student and was working towards her Fashion Design degree with the intent of working in high-end fashion when she graduates.

So fast forward five years and Krystal has completed her degree and we are still dating. I feel like the time is right to take the next step and take our relationship to the next level. Tonight, after we eat at Benny Hanas, I have arranged to rent a horse and we will ride it down the freshly grated sand of Carsons Beach. I had already convinced the beach staff to hide a large emerald colored wine bottle, a short distance down the beach and obviously far enough up to avoid the high tide washing it out to sea. When she sees the bottle, I know that she will be naturally curious and want to stop to take a look at what is inside. Inside will be a hand written note from me asking her to marry me. As she is reading it, I will be kneeling and offering her an engagement ring. It is hard for me to imagine the look of wonder and joy that she will have when she says yes. I am so confident that she will say yes that I have arranged for fireworks and a mariachi band to serenade us on our way back down the beach.

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### **Kamek's Redemption** **By Jarrett Fields**

One wonderful day at Bowser's Castle, Bowser the King of the Koopas along with the seven Koopalings named Ludwig, Wendy, Morton, Iggy, Larry, Lemmy, and Roy and his son Bowser Junior were all celebrating the peace of the Mushroom Kingdom and Darkland the minions were also cheering as well. "Gwahahaha! The war of the Mushroom Kingdom is finally over!" said Bowser. As Bowser stood in front of his throne the eight young Koopas were cheering loudly.

"Finally, after all this time it's over now!" said Lemmy excitedly. "You said it Lemmy bro Bwahahaha!" said Iggy. "Hmph well I still liked to bash heads, but I like peace too." said Roy coolly. "MORTON CAN FINALLY EAT IN PEACE! MORTON WOULD BE MORE TONS!" said Morton.

"YEAH! Now I can finally be a tennis champion just like I always wanted to be!" said Larry. "Ugh whatever Larry, but I can now be a proper Koopa Princess now!" said Wendy. "Well I for one don't have to be royal if I wanted to but I can now practice sympathy music for most of my life now and still be a royal Koopa to aid in young Junior's time of need." said Ludwig. "I would be more than happy to accept for all of your help to aid me in running this kingdom when I take the throne someday." said Junior. "And you will be pretty soon my son before I retire and---" Bowser was cut off when he saw some airships at a different color approaching. One ship turned to the portside and floated there for a few seconds. Then the cannons on the portside fired on to Bowser's Castle. An invasion on Bowser's Kingdom has begun.

The ships all surrounded the castle and fired cannon balls and bullet bills at the koopas of Darkland below. All the koopas were running for their lives and screaming in confusion and shock. Bowser saw this happening from inside the castle and snarled. "Who dares launch an attack on my kingdom?" said Bowser angrily. "I have no idea, maybe the one who started this was me "Lord Bowser" skreee hehehe!" said a familiar voice sinisterly. The koopa family turned to a familiar magikoopa in blue robes and glasses in front of the throne room doors. "Kamek? What are you doing here I thought you were celebrating the peace with us." said Bowser. "NO! The truth is my former king is that I'm here to arrest you and dethrone you once and for all!" said Kamek. "Grr but why are you doing this I thought you were one of us?" said Bowser furiously. Kamek took out his wand and fired a teleportation spell on the other eight koopalings leaving only Bowser and Kamek alone. "HEY! What did you do to them?" said Bowser. "Oh, relax your Nastiness I only teleported them somewhere far away." said Kamek calmly. "GRAWGH! YOU ARE GOING TO PAY FOR THI--" Bowser was cut off when Kamek fired a spell directly at Bowser's face causing for him to be weak on the ground. Bowser looked up dazedly at Kamek and mustered up his words on one question at Kamek. "Why? Why did you do this to us?" said Bowser weakly. "Believe me, I didn't want to do this either but, after a certain someone showed me the truth about all of you. I felt like I need to get back at you for what you did to me in the past." said Kamek. Then Kamek knocked him out cold.

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### **Get Ready for Summer Storms** **By J. Smetana**

I was at Nookies trading barbed witticisms with Joyce Saxon when my 'phone rang. Yello I answered. Hey man said Peaches jever WONDER where Jerry is at? No not really Peaches but why don't you just tell me. Yeah man he's on that sex island you know the one with the 14 y.o. girls. You mean the tropical paradise frequented by bold men of distinction like William Jefferson Clinton and Prince Andrew? That's the one. Funny – it doesn't seem like Jerry's milieu. His what? I mean it seems kind of out of place for our Jerry. Yeah that's what I wanna tell you, man, Jerry's a millionaire now...maybe a billionaire! Whoa! 'Splain, Peaches – gimme the deets! Did he get on that TV show Who Wants to be a Millionaire? No man even better—he did that thing where you zap a Chinese guy you don't even know and you get a million bucks! He did that? I thought that was just something they talked about in psychology class I didn't realize it was an actual thing! Oh it's a thing alright—Jerry even did it a few more time just to build up a nest egg he said. Wow I knew Jerry had all the morals of a snake but doesn't he have any qualms? No morals, no qualms, Jerry said it was payback for all the bad drywall they been sending us.

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## **Sometimes She Wondered**

### **By Carol Karvon**

Sara's life was comfortable now. She had a good job and she was able to afford the rental of a small two-bedroom house on the outskirts of a large city. It wasn't always so.

Sometimes she wondered what her life would have been like had she made different choices along the way.

She wondered in particular about a man named Mark who she had dated many years ago when she was just nineteen and knew everything. Over the years, she wondered what had happened to him. He was the soul of compassion and kindness, but there was no chemistry, no excitement, no fireworks. He was thoughtful and caring and peaceable, but on the dull side. He was hardworking and besides dating Sara, he supported a widowed mother and a single sister.

Sara was craving excitement and drama and she found it in Peter. He was everything a young woman wanted, or so she thought at the time. He had plans and was going somewhere, at least that's what he told her. Their dates were always different. He invited her to parties and dances and she was never bored. If he had a few rough edges, she overlooked them, after all he was fun and he made her laugh.

She and Mark went out on conventional dates – movies, dinner, visiting friends and relatives. He was her friend, but, oh so predictable. He brought her gifts each time she saw him, but that only made her secretly resent him. He was unaware of her feelings and kept asking her out. Sara's friends told her how lucky she was to have such a caring and considerate boyfriend. She'd sneer and ask if one of them wanted him.

When Peter entered Sara's life, she started seeing less and less of Mark by choice, hers, not his. He didn't know she was seeing someone else and couldn't figure out what was happening to their relationship. He was too kind to ask her about it. He was thinking marriage and she was thinking escape. She felt like he was smothering her. She was only 19 and didn't want to be tied down to anyone yet. In time, they didn't see each other anymore. They just drifted apart. He kept asking her out, but she was always busy.

Sara and Peter married a year later and their life was a series of hectic up and down emotional upheavals. His grandiose plans never panned out and he went from one job to another. In the meantime, Sara worked hard at her job and was promoted to manager of her department. Sara became disillusioned and the last straw came when Peter took their savings and spent them on one of his wild schemes, without even asking her if it was alright with her.

Eventually, they went their separate ways and Sara was left to pay off their joint debts. It was important to her to maintain a good credit history. She dreamed of buying her own home someday, but for now settled for the rental she could afford.

Over the years, Sara often wondered what happened to Mark. She tried to find him at times to apologize to him for the way she had taken their friendship for granted and discarded him. Every

so often, she even searched for his name on the internet, but never had any luck. She realized at some point in the midst of the chaos her life had become, that a steady caring and thoughtful man would have been very welcome in her life.

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