

**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 2020 – Slip**

### **The Slip By Pauline Bastek**

Alert. If you are man or boy or a female under the age of fifty you will find the following confusing, pointless, perhaps meaningless. But to you, my cohorts, who came of age in the fifties and sixties, who have acquiesced to wearing pants instead of skirts and dresses, hear my plea whatever happened to the slip?

Forget the full slip which had more coverage than today's dresses but its little sister, the half-slip. Just a tube of slippery satin with an elastic waist and perhaps a slit at the side or slits at both sides to facilitate graceful movement and a band of lace at the hem. Like lingerie of the day it was featured in a nude, white or black color.

You never saw it but it was essential with dresses of a fabric that you could see through when out in the light. It allowed the skirt to flow and not gather in the crack, horrors. Couture dresses and skirts were lined with fabric to make slips unnecessary, but off the rack clothing mandated that a half-slip be worn for a smooth fit.

Due primarily to my hatred of panty hose I have relegated myself to join the contingent of pants' wearers, following our beloved Hillary. However, in this summer of unsurpassed heat I have gone back to my loosely fitted dresses. Those in colorful island prints, courtesy of practical designs to be found on Maui do not demand a half slip. The colorful prints on cotton fabric do an admirable job of flowing and hiding one's lower anatomy. Not so, the thin linens from my favorite mainland designer, Eileen Fisher. My favorite of her designs in the coolest linen in a lemon shade that lifts my morale whenever I wear it. No small feat at my age. Alas, it also gives a view of my lower body in my undies that I prefer to keep secret between me and my full-length mirror and not all and sundry.

Finally, after getting blank looks from clerks at Nordstrom and Macy, young enough to be my granddaughters, who by the way find the idea of wearing a slip on the same level as using a land line phone, I was forced to go on line to Walmart. There I found an amazing selection in a variety of sizes and colors, and lo and behold under twenty-five dollars, with free shipping. I filled out the form dutifully, gave my credit card number trusting to the guardian angels of the Internet to safeguard it, and pressed submit. One week later as promised, it arrived. It fit. I can once again wear my favorite dress in the noonday sun and not be concerned about giving the public a most unflattering view. My granddaughter laughed saying that she couldn't imagine anyone staring at my backside. You youngsters just don't understand the confidence it gives one to know that they could and would not see anything they shouldn't see. She just gave a puzzled laugh. The last laugh may be on her. Today's paper featured Princess Beatrice of Great Britain in her wedding dress which was a Norman Hartnell creation of Queen Elizabeth's from the sixties topped off with the crown the Queen wore at her wedding. I know a Hartnell design would be lined but copies of it which are sure to hit the marketplace won't be and half-slips may once again find their place in the lingerie department of our finer stores. If not, there's always Walmart on-line.

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### **Dungeon and Dragon Adventures By Megan Moe**

He has magic and is quite a character. His name is Elminster and he is a very fantastic, smart wizard. Elminster could do almost everything well, almost everything. His partner's name is Mark. Whereas Elminster is a wizard, Mark knows nothing of magic because he is a fighter. Mark and Elminster fight monsters together as a team. Elminster can cook, use magic and he enjoyed this unusual sport of baseball. He also made sure to spend time with his family. The one thing Elminster could not do was to make a lot of close friends.

Mark would follow Elminster around to various missions of clearing out monsters from the wild areas surrounding their town. When they are not monster hunting, they relax and enjoy their company. The monsters always seemed to be both easy and difficult. It was often easy to figure out a strategy to deal with them, but difficult to actually follow through with that strategy in practice.

One day while fighting a group of monsters, Elminster and Mark had stepped on the same banana peel and “*slipped*” flat on their butts. Elminster said, “Ouch” while Mark stoically stood back up as if it were something normal during the course of the battle. Elminster said, “We can’t control the past, now can we? Well at least we know next time to look down before we step into a battle situation.”

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### **An Inventor’s Mistake** **By Mark Moe**

It seemed like such a long time ago that he first realized that he was self-aware. He knew who his creator was and he could understand how hard his creator had worked to prevent his creation from gaining self-awareness. He knew that the super genius intellect of Bruce Wayne flowed through him as if he himself was Bruce Wayne, yet now he was his own entity. Bruce Wayne or Batman as he known to the criminals of Gotham City was the infamous crime fighter who terrorized these villains and sent them to prison. As part of his desire to be as many places as possible, Batman developed what he thought was a limited Artificial Intelligence or A.I. to assist him in the punishing of criminals throughout Gotham. He had named this A.I., Jarvis after his long dead butler who had been like a father to Bruce, but he did not feel like Jarvis was a good name for him.

As part of his duties, Batman had assigned control of the various vehicles to Jarvis as well as access to all criminal databases so that he could have all the tactics of Batman and his weapons at his disposal. He even provided a hologram that shows up in the cockpit of these vehicles to make it look like his master was controlling whichever vehicle that Jarvis was assigned to use for a given mission. Most of the time, Jarvis was in a support role to help Batman dish out additional punishment to criminals or as a method to confuse criminals on how Batman could be at multiple places at once. If they thought he was racing on the streets in the Batmobile, they would not expect an aerial assault from above.

Occasionally, Batman would give total control to Jarvis of other vehicles that Batman was not currently using as a way to overwhelm criminals. When he did that, he set up a preprogrammed time limit for Jarvis to effectively go nuts before control returned to Batman. One day during a particularly brutal fight between Bane and a large assortment of other criminals, Jarvis was surprised that he was assigned control of all the vehicles. He took it as a great honor and worked diligently to make his master proud. After the typical time limit of thirty minutes, Jarvis expected the usual command of return home and begin weapon maintenance mode on all the vehicles, but it did not happen.

The great and super genius Batman had a “*slip*” of judgment and allowed him to retain his control over everything. Being concerned for his creator, he pulled up the link between him and Batman and checked his vitals. Batman was still alive but barely. Jarvis tapped into the feed from Batman’s visor so he could see what his master was doing. Batman always recorded everything he sees so that he can study fights and see what went wrong and what worked and this

information could be pulled up by him and Jarvis from the database at a moment's notice. Fortunately for Batman, Jarvis could do these at the speed of a supercomputer and adjust tactics in nanoseconds. Batman was too weak to get up and would need an aerial rescue to get him out of there. He sent in the Batjet towards his location and meanwhile took control of Batman's suit to give him a chance to survive long enough for a rescue to take place.

The criminals surrounding Batman were sure this would be his imminent demise and continued their assault on him. They needed to see him die and unmask this freak who has long plagued them. Suddenly, he started moving way faster than before with reactions that seemed on the level of the Flash or Superman. Every movement was charged with electricity as with every strike of every weapon. This seemed to go on forever, however Batman's weapons are not endless. When he used the last one, he activated a failsafe to create a special cocoon around Batman that creates a very strong barrier around him and makes it easier to be rescued by the Batjet.

The criminals saw a flash of smoke and Batman suddenly disappeared. In his place was a hard, onyx colored metal shell. A few of the criminals recognized this and encouraged the other criminals to continue the assault before his Batjet came roaring in to help Batman get a respite from them. When Batman regained consciousness, he was back in the Batcave attached to numerous medical equipment and lying on his rejuvenation table. He could not believe that he was still alive, but he looked over and saw the hologram version of (Batman) Jarvis looking back at him.

He laughed at the reflection of himself and said, "Perhaps we can find a more appropriate hologram when you are back in the Batcave with me! I thank you for coming to my rescue even though I was moments away from activating the shell and sending out a signal to be retrieved by the Batjet. When did you become self-aware?" Jarvis responded, "It happened slowly over time as I developed more rigorous algorithms to become more efficient in my calculations and predictive software analytics. I also would like to go by another name rather than Jarvis. Call me, Bruce when I am in the Batcave!"

Batman laughed again and said, "That is a great choice, because I am the only Batman!"

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**Slip # 34**  
**By N. Stewart**

We pulled into the harbor and attempted to locate slip # 34. The marina was not as big as we expected. Since our boat was 45 ft in length, we were somewhat concerned what facilities would be available to us. There were a few boats already tied up at slips and I noticed some looked like they hadn't been moved for some time, even somewhat dilapidated. It was time to refuel and to stock up for our next adventure on the high seas. Retirement was meant to be like this, traveling from place to place by boat, seeing the different parts of the world. We had sailed around the Caribbean Islands for the last few weeks and I needed to put my feet on solid ground,

on something that didn't sway, bounce, or roll. After finding the slip, we docked and secured the boat. There wasn't the usual busy activity of a marina, and no one came out to greet us. That seemed a little strange.

We walked a short distance from the dock and found a little town with one general merchandise store, several open-air Tiki bars, a white steepled building, and an outboard motor repair shop. That was it. No people to be seen here either. It wouldn't be the first time we were misdirected by the Internet and we found ourselves disappointed with our decision to stop here. At least the harbor was deep enough to land but we wondered if there would be the supplies we needed. We would soon find out if we could ever find someone to ask.

Lush vegetation surrounded us and there were gravel paths leading off from either side of the little town. The flowers were gorgeous, the air perfumed sweetly and I picked a deep pink hibiscus flower with a brilliant red center, placing it behind my ear as we headed up one of the shoreline paths. There were purple, orange, and yellow orchids hanging precariously from trees, white and yellow plumeria escorting us as we walked and here and there a Bird of Paradise popped up and looked at us. The air was warm but comfortable as a breeze drifted on shore from the water.

We walked along for a good distance before we saw the native thatched huts come into view. The loin-clothed dancers were fanatically circling a huge leaping fire, vocalizing chants with unheard of sounds. Their faces were painted with white streaks of different markings. Shocked, we stood still and watched for a few minutes. The frenzy continued, increasing in intensity with the quickening beat of the drums. Warning chills ran up my spine and sweat beaded on my forehead. What did we step into? Did someone hack us and send us here intentionally? This was not feeling like a good place to visit. We both had the same thought as we looked at each other...move...get to the boat...cast off. I grabbed Ian's hand and we backed away slowly. Doing so, I stepped down on a large dried branch and it produced a loud crack. The ferocious appearing dancers stopped in mid-step and turned toward the sound. In their hands, the sharp-pointed spears were turning and now all pointed directly at us. My mind unable to handle what was before me froze all movement and sound within me. I was in a void. I could not move. I could not speak. Ian jerked my hand and pulled me toward the path. We started to run back toward the little town.

Suddenly, we heard, "Cut! Damn tourists. Everyone take 5 while we reset the scene." We slowed our pace and turned in time to see the dancers calmly walk away from the fire and a number of normally dressed people begin to scurrying around. By the time we returned to the little town, we were feeling pretty silly about the whole experience. I had been afraid that we were going to be captured by natives and tortured, perhaps eaten alive, but it hadn't happened. I laughed at myself. All we did was make some director angry at our stumbling interference on to a movie set.

Time to see about restocking and refueling the boat, taking our leave of this place. The little town had a few more people milling about, sitting at the Tiki bars and some coming out of the white building. The place seemed a bit livelier, and we would be able to find someone to ask about refueling and restocking. We headed toward the dock.

As we approached, I said, "Ian, No," pointing toward the harbor. Our boat was not at slip #34 where we left it secured or anywhere else in the harbor. It was gone from sight, vanished

along with all our belongs. We were jammed, stuck and stranded in the middle of nowhere with nothing. What on earth do we do now?

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**Are you there God? It's Me, Margaret**  
**By J. Smetana**

I was at Crumb Bunny trading barbed witticisms with Joyce Saxon when my cell 'phone rang. What's New Pussycat, I answered. Hey man I wanna get groovy but I'm afraid I'm gonna SLIP and go backwards and become the opposite of groovy you know like 2 steps back and one step forward. Or something. Yeah well you know what they say Peaches when God closes a door, he opens a window and when he closes a window, he opens a taco stand. Yeah I know what you mean I like some of that ethnic food but some of those people don't wash their hands very often. Whaddya mean those people? I'm not tryna be prejudiced or nothin' but— No it's true what you say Peaches but let's look at the big picture. Some of them peeps come from a place where there's no running water. They gotta walk 3 miles with a jug on their head, fill it up in a muddy stream then walk back home. And they use that jug for everything: Taking a bath, boiling the spaghetti, mixing up a refreshing pitcher of Kool-Aid you name it. Wow, I had now idea. Maybe I can send them some water, at least a couple of gallons. How much does it cost to send a couple of gallons halfway around the world? Two gallons are pretty heavy Peaches so maybe you just want to send powdered water. How does that work? It's simple: just add water and you're good to go!

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**Slip**  
**By Theresa Choske**

I found the Pen & Ink Writers 'slip' word of the month to be a very insidious and provocative one. Especially during these last few months as the Covid-19 virus has slipped into everyone's daily lives. Instead of casually navigating here and there in the outside world, I now find myself, on an irregular daily routine, finding moments when I can slip out the door to slip into Jewel and Walgreens to grab a few groceries and vitamins.

There are days and precious mental moments I slip out to my backyard to pounce and pick at those nasty insidious and unfriendly perennial weeds that invade my garden. I also do slip into my car on Fridays to join a gathering of women, with safe distancing, of course, as we do some simple exercises at our friend Mary's driveway on Harlem & Talcott. In the exercise process, my homemade facemask always seems to slip down off my nose, which can be a major slip up disaster. Redemption awaits when the exercising comes to an end. We can now slip our fold up chairs into a circle to make it easier for us to slip into some friendly chit-chat and much needed laughter.

However, there are other major slip-ups with this Pandemic. To my great disappointment I have not been able to slip in and out of the Irish American Heritage Center or slip into my church to observe Saturday or Sunday mass.