

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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September 2020 – Habit, Habitual, Habitat

Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire By Carol Karon

Lionel was a habitual liar. Everyone knew it, but no one wanted to confront him and hurt his feelings. He was a nice guy. Everyone liked him.

But, behind his back, he became known as “Lying Lionel”.

Lionel reminded people of the Fairy Tale called “The Boy Who Cried Wolf.” It was about a boy with a bad habit of lying to get attention. He would call for help on the pretext he was in danger and everyone would come running to his rescue only to learn it was another of his pranks. The last time he called for help everyone assumed he was pulling another prank and ignored his desperate cries for help. Unfortunately, this time he wasn't fooling, he really was in danger.

Lionel started telling fibs or ‘little white lies,’ as his parents called them, when he was a young child. They considered this to be harmless and sometimes even bragged to their friends that their Lionel had a creative way of embellishing a story. In that way, and with their unconscious approval, Lionel moved on to bigger and more fantastic stories.

As he grew to adulthood, he realized more and more that living in his parents' home, under their care and their rules had been tiresome and boring. He decided that his life had been dull and uneventful. He needed excitement in his life. So, when he went away to college, he realized he could put his talent for fabrication to good use.

Unbeknownst to his parents and friends, he invented a more interesting autobiography for himself.

It was easy to fool new acquaintances at school because they knew him only for a short time. He avoided his relatives and old friends and thus was able to carry off this deception. He was leading a double life and it had all started with his habit of embellishing the truth.

It was in college that he first became fascinated with politics and took courses in Political Science. He was a natural. He signed up for any campus club or organization that focused on politics and volunteered for the tasks no one else wanted to do. Lionel answered phones, made copies, even stuffed envelopes for mailings. He never complained about what he was asked to do. His willingness to take on any and all tasks, no matter how menial, endeared him to the other volunteers. He was making a reputation for himself as a “go-to-guy”. People said, “if you want something done, go to Lionel”.

The campaign manager for an aldermanic candidate took notice of Lionel and approached him, asking if he might be interested in joining the politician’s staff as an assistant to the office manager. Lionel was thrilled and decided right then he would and said he was honored to be considered for such an important and interesting job.

Lionel hadn’t broken his lifelong habit of skirting the truth and this was just another of his fibs. Secretly, Lionel thought he was destined for good things and they should be happy to have him on their side. He had bigger and better things in mind and decided he was on his way to a memorable political career. Who knew, he might even become president someday. After all, what did a few lies here and there matter. He had to start somewhere. Nobody really expected politicians to be totally honest, did they? What did a little white lie here or there matter? No one really cared. If he believed something strongly enough, he could make everyone believe it. He wasn’t hurting anyone, was he? Everybody did it.

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Creatures of Habit **By N. Stewart**

A woman is seated at a table for two at the Blue Moon Restaurant, waiting with her arms folded across her chest, her legs crossed at the knees, and under the table her top foot swung rapidly from side to side. (*Just like him she muttered to herself. Late as usual. Could he ever arrive on time just one time? After all I’m here at his requested and I have more important things to do than sit around and wait at his beckoned call.*)

“Liz,” he said, dipping his head in greeting as he approached the table. Then smiling he said, “How are you, good to see you, and thank you for meeting with me?”

“I’m better without you, Jim. That’s for sure. Let’s get this over with.” (*I’d like to slap that smirk right off his face, she thought to herself.*) “Why did you have to see me in person and why couldn’t we do this over the phone?”

(She must be nervous he thought, twirling and curling her hair around her left index finger like usual.) “Um...I thought it would be easier to discuss money without you hanging up on me. I thought it would be more comfortable for both of us if we could have...um...lunch together in person. I’ll...um..., of course, um...pay although you have most of my money now.

(Stop saying ‘um,’ she thought. It drives me insane to listen to you do that all the time!) “Jim, let it go. Will you? It was as much my money as it was yours and I need it to care for **our** children.” *(She sighed, not that you ever cared about us with all your side adventures.)* “Waitress we’d like to order and please give me the check. I’ll have the salad with filet medallions, blue cheese dressing, and a split of your best champaign. Darling, she said super sweetly, what would you like?”

“Um,...Just coffee for me,” he said, tapping his finger tips on the table in a familiar yet annoying rhythm. “Liz, I need you to...um...cut back on your expenses for a little while. I have been temporarily furloughed from my job and can’t keep up the full payments. I was hoping we could come to an amiable understanding without going back to court.”

“I’m so sorry to hear about your job, Jim. Perhaps, you need to find a second job...or a third. Best you keep up the payments if you don’t want to go to jail for failure to pay me and the kids. Are you sure you only want coffee, Dear? I have enough of your money to pay for our lunch today. I don’t want you to leave hungry.”

(There it is that sarcastic tone again, he shuttered, like scratching nails on a chalk board. This is going to get us nowhere) Liz, I didn’t think you would be very understanding but I had hope. It’s for a little while until my company is...um...transitioned. I will be back working full time in two months. I’m asking for a little compassion. But I forgot you have none. This is useless. Waitress, I’m leaving now. Here’s two 20s for her lunch. Turning toward Liz he said, ‘Have a good meal on me. It may be your last. *(It was stupid of me to believe I could reason with her. Look at that shrew of a face.)* He turned and started to walk away.

“Goodbye Jim, see you in jail or in court whichever comes first,” she said with a deliberate phony smile. *(She sighed and thought did you really think I would fall for that sob story? I’m not the fool you think I am.)* Turning to the waitress she said “I’ll have that salad now, thank you.”

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“The Lost Imperial Arms: Encursio the Eternal Dragon” **By Mark Moe**

After the fall of the child emperor, Emperor Yang, there were only a handful of magical weapons known as “Imperial Arms” left in existence. The last user of one of the most powerful Imperial Arms, Encursio, was Tatsumi of the rebel group, Night Raid. It was believed to be destroyed after the conflict with General Esdeath, but stories have surfaced all over the former empire of someone appearing in the Encursio armor once again.

Shinjiro Kurasaki was one of the newest researchers on the Imperial Arms Collection Project. This project's intent was to not only collect the remaining Imperial Arms, but to safeguard them from the wrong people. Shinjiro poured over the latest reports and sightings of Encursio. He continually would tap the end of his pen against his lower lip "*habitually*" while looking for any clues to the identity of this new Encursio.

If he could find the new Encursio, Shinjiro knows that he can convince him to surrender the armor for the greater good. "Surely, the new wielder will see that with the empire gone, that there is no need to hold onto Encursio," he said out loud. "You had better not say that to the lead researcher. He would tell you that you are being foolishly naïve and optimistic replied Kari Nakamura.

"What is so naïve about using logic and having realistic expectations when we start the negotiation process? asked Shinjiro. "What fool would willingly turn over Encursio, the magically summoned, silver dragon armor with the trademark spear?" asked Kari. "Hopefully a fool who realized the target of wearing an Imperial Arms is far worse fate than the generous price we would offer to grant them peace of mind," replied Shinjiro.

The next day, Shinjiro received a letter from the government messenger service. The letter claimed to have found the new user of Encursio in Echigo Province. "That is less than an hour travel time from here! This could be the chance I need to secure Encursio! I will leave at once!" exclaimed Shinjiro excitedly. When Shinjiro arrived at the location, he found a figure dressed in the Encursio armor overlooking one of the battle sites with the purple cape flapping in the breeze. The armor looked even more amazing than the videos and photos he had seen. The figure took no note of Shinjiro approaching or even that he cared at all. Shinjiro was able to walk right up to him and began to introduce himself.

"Hello there. My name is Shinjiro Kurasaki and I would like to know who the new user of Encursio is and if you are willing to entertain a deal where I can help free you the burden of this Imperial Arms." The figure looked over at him and his eyes glowed with a bright, golden light. While he was waiting for this person to speak, Encursio faded out of sight and disappeared. Shinjiro realized this new Encursio was just a specter of the past user, Tatsumi. The rumors surrounding this new Encursio being a new user were turning out to be false. In this instance, it was clearly Tatsumi.

Once he returned to the Science Institute, Shinjiro had several of his colleagues report similar instances of encountering Encursio and him vanishing from sight. He was heartbroken because Encursio was only a ghost looking for someone or something unseen.

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Habit
By Edward J. Scheffler

I am plagued by the classic habit of getting up in the morning.

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Missing Colum McCann

By Theresa Choske

Many years ago, when I was a member of the monthly book club, 'The Friends of Irish Literature,' which was headed up by facilitator, Frank West, I would faithfully read most, but not all, of the selected fiction books. Since the club is no longer in existence, my choice reading habits are now selective biographies and histories of some of the revolutionary, and not so revolutionary Irish and American men and women.

However, my mind always lights up when I recall a happenstance moment several years ago while volunteering at one of the Irish Books, arts and music program, also known as iBAM, held yearly at the Irish American Heritage Center. I was stepping out of the elevator, when my friend, and co-volunteer in the Irish Center's Library, hollered out to me that she had just come from the Irish fiction writer, Colum McCann's lecture. I couldn't help but exclaim, in a somewhat similar tone of voice, 'you saw Colum McCann'? When out of nowhere, and in a flash, a man going in the opposite direction in the hallway turned around and answered in a similar voice, 'yes, she did.' I was blown away, immediately recognizing it was indeed the writer himself, Colum McCann. All three of us had a good laugh about this unexpectant, but very rewarding and lovely coincidence.

Even though I was still not a hardcore fiction writing fan, that doesn't mean that I wasn't a fan and admirer of the fiction writer, Colum McCann. I felt sad that I couldn't attend his lecture as I was doing a reading for the Celtic Women International in another section of the building. It was indeed unfortunate that I missed hearing and seeing this wonderfully brilliant and amazing author. Then again, who on God's green earth doesn't love some other Dublin born Irish writers, but two thumbs up, most especially, when it's Colum McCann that's doing the writing.

I have always had great admiration for this author of 'TransAtlantic,' 'Let the Great World Spin,' and 'Thirteen Ways of Looking'. I do try to make a habit of keeping up with some of his insightful and awesome quotes, such as, 'There are no days more full than those we go back to,' and 'There's a part of me that thinks perhaps we go on existing in a place after we've left it,' and 'Literature can remind us that not all life is already written down: there are still so many stories to be told.'

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