

**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 document of no more than 1000 words (approximately 2 pages). 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. Contact Nancy at [nestewart@ameritech.net](mailto:nestewart@ameritech.net) for information. The Pen & Ink writer's Group will return to the Eisenhower Library on July 18, 2022.

**Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group**  
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**Please Observe**  
**By Carol Karvon**

There were twelve teenagers gathered around the countertop in the Home Economics Lab at the Will Rogers High School. Some of them had signed up for the class because they were expecting it to be a breeze.

Mrs. Clausen was aware of the misconception among the students that her class was an easy A. She had other ideas and would not be giving anyone a grade that wasn't earned. She was old fashioned that way. Her former students thought she was tough, but fair. She had earned their respect.

"Welcome to the first day of class and the new semester. I am delighted to see that this class is evenly divided between boys and girls. At one time in the past only girls would show any interest in acquiring home economic skills. We know that in these times men are taking more and more care of themselves and more interest in helping to raise their families. The more you learn, the better you can become more self-sufficient and gain greater self-esteem.

As some of you may know, we've come a long way from the outdated idea that homemaking skills were exclusively meant for women. We don't even call it Home Economics anymore. It's now referred to as Family and Consumer Sciences.

Family and Consumer Sciences covers a broad range of topics that can include human development, personal and family finances, housing and interior design, food science and preparation, nutrition and wellness, textiles and apparel, and even some consumer issues.

Okay", Mrs. Clausen said to her students. "Anyone who thinks this will be an easy class, should think again. Maintaining a home and taking care of a family is one of the hardest jobs there is. And I'm glad to see boys in this class.

I want to suggest to each and every one of you to observe closely the lessons we will be covering. On some days we will be learning how to cook a simple, but nutritious meal. And, please keep in mind, we will be eating that meal at the end of class. So, we want it to be edible.

At other times, we may be learning how to pay bills, balance a checking account, or even follow a budget. Textiles and apparel could cover such topics as shopping for our clothes, sewing, or even mending something, if necessary. Remember the more we learn to do for ourselves the better we feel about ourselves and that can boost our confidence.

So, enough talk, let's get started.

Does anyone have any questions?

No. Well, I have a couple for you. Do any of you help out at home already?

Maybe you help prepare meals. Maybe you peel potatoes. Maybe you do your own laundry or help out in the yard. Maybe you clear the dishes off the table and wash them or put them into the dishwasher.

All those things you do to help out can benefit you and your parents and help you develop valuable life skills. Just in case you're not doing anything around your house to help out, it's never too late to start.

Some of the things you'll observe in this class and hopefully put into practice will give you a sense of accomplishment in a job well done. And, I'm sure your family will appreciate your efforts.

So, let's get started. The first thing we'll do today is introduce ourselves to each other and tell everyone why we decided to enroll in this class. I'll go first.

My name is Julia Clausen. You can call me Mrs. Clausen. I've been teaching Home Economics, and as I mentioned earlier now called Family and Consumer Sciences, for many years. I'm excited to be your teacher. I have a family including three teenagers and have enjoyed teaching them the basic life skills I'll be sharing with all of you. I'm looking forward to getting to know each of you personally as the class progresses.

Thank you for your attention. Please continue the introductions now. Who wants to go next? Don't be shy. Eventually everyone will have a turn.

Good luck to each and every one of you".

###

## **Observe**

**By Edward Scheffler**

American novelist and short-story writer Ernest Hemingway said:

When people talk,  
Listen completely.  
As we are an audience of  
On-lookers  
Entranced into the learning process.  
Captivated by the performance;  
Attentive to watch, listen, and observe.

Laurence Oliver, one of the greatest actors of all time said in his memoirs:

That the trick in his trade is but to make the audience  
feel that they are observing reality.  
And this is not  
Easy.

Because to convey words one needs  
to exaggerate but subtly,  
To highlight them  
Ever so slightly.

Expressing our thoughts should appear as an outburst of spontaneity,  
Rather than in a platitude of insipid pre-arranged order.

###

### **July 4<sup>th</sup> Festivities** **By N. Stewart**

I was outside impatiently waiting alongside the car for the rest of them. It was July 4<sup>th</sup> and my family was staying in a small town in Wisconsin for the weekend. The sun was shining and the air was cool. I kicked at the dirt with the tip of my gym shoe. Hurry up. Where is everyone, anyway?

At last, we all packed into the car and headed into town to see the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade. We parked two blocks away and had to walk down 2<sup>nd</sup> street to Walworth Avenue. People were coming from all directions and marching along to an imaginary beat of a drum. BOOM!... BOOM! ...Boom, boom, boom! Come on, please, let's walk a little faster. Finally, reaching the parade route, we walked along until we found the best view. I was wearing my navy blue shorts and a red and white-striped top. My socks were white with blue stars scattered all over. My blond hair was pulled back in a ponytail and accented with red, white and blue ribbons tied in a bow. I carried a small American flag that I waved. BOOM!...BOOM!.. Boom, boom, boom! This time, the drumming I heard was real. Here it comes!

First, came the children, riding tricycles and bicycles decorated with red, white, and blue streamers woven through the spokes. Pinwheels, attached to the handlebars, furiously spun in the wind. Next, BOOM!... BOOM!... Boom, boom, boom came the marching band with its bass drums defining the beat. The marchers stopped on the street, just in front of the viewing stand; the high-hatted drum majorette raised his arms skyward, presenting his baton, and graciously bowing his head before the town dignitaries. Raising his head, he blew long and loud on his

whistle, commanding the band to begin playing John Phillip Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever." The trumpets blared, the drums rolled, the cymbals crashed, and I jumped up and down, and wiggled all around, and tapped my feet - never stopping.

Suddenly, my view was blocked and all I could see was a yellow-flowered skirt blowing in the breeze. I looked one way and then, the other — nothing but yellow appeared before my eyes. Oh, no! Just then hands reached down and surrounded my waist, picking me up. I now sat high up on his shoulders as I continued to watch the parade. "Thanks, Daddy. I love you," I said. We stopped for a hot dog with ketchup and mustard from a street vender as the parade was winding down. And then had some blue cotton candy. It was sticky as I pulled off each piece. We walked in a crowd of people to the car and headed home. The big event was to come in the evening – the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks at the town park.

I was again outside impatiently waiting alongside the car for the rest of them to appear. It was getting dark and I wanted a good seat at the park to observe the fireworks. We had to park several blocks away and we walked along with everyone else. We sat in the stands and waited. It was chilly so we were all bundled up with sweaters and jeans and blankets wrapped around us.

When it got very dark, the first of the fireworks was shot off. The display was spectacular with white stars shooting across the sky, and before that was over another with red stars spread across, and then another green one rocketed into the sky. Interspersed were loud, booming noisy ones that shook me in my seat. We ooh-ed and aah-ed at all we saw. Finally, the 1812 Overture began to play and it really got noisy with the cannon fire continuously going off, and one rocket after another filling the sky and smoke was everywhere. Our attention was drawn from the sky unto the field where the fireworks created a large American flag; the Star-Spangled Banner began to play. Everyone rose to their feet and started singing along. Then, the celebration was over, gone until next year when it would return for another 4<sup>th</sup> of July display of color.

We left the park, walking toward our car. It was late and I was really tired from the activities of the day, so my Daddy lifted me up and carried me the rest of the way to the car. "Thanks, Daddy. I love you," I said and immediately fell asleep in his arms.

###

### **Forward or Back? By Vicki Elberfeld**

I was at the Campus a few Wednesdays ago to inform my supervisor I am retiring from tutoring writing at Oakton College purely for financial reasons. Although I have to ask myself if my reasons are only financial. Surely there must be something I can aspire to do with all the extra time. So far, however, I'm pretty much coming up empty. All I've really achieved is to work on my German, catch up on doctors' appointments, get a root canal, and clean my refrigerator. Pretty exciting stuff, no? Yesterday I hung out with my retired friends at a social eatery from roughly 1:00 pm until 1:00 am. Initially our conversation was pretty desultory old

folks' talk, mainly focused on minor health issues such as cataract surgery, hearing and eye exams, and one poor friend's unpleasant but mild brush with Covid. We spoke longingly of pre pandemic summers and some of our more exciting adventures across the pond and beyond, though after a couple of years of hibernation, not one of us felt we had either the energy or the inclination to venture anywhere distant, expensive, or lengthy and strenuous. But soon we forgot about ourselves and our limitations, and we plunged tensely into discussions of current events: Roe v Wade and the Supreme Court decision, the January 6 investigation, and tomorrow's primary election. I was so grateful no one mentioned the Johnny Depp/Amber Heard defamation suit, although I'm ashamed to confess I had watched some of the footage and invested time I'll never get back. A few hours later I hunkered down in the corner of the restaurant for a Zoom meeting for a New Yorker short story discussion, and I don't know what the others talked about. We friends have just begun seeing each other again after a long pandemic absence, so it didn't matter much what we talked about, as we were just so happy to be together again. But retirement has provided us with the leisure to read, write, and watch endlessly fascinating films and videos on YouTube, leaving us with a surplus of conversation topics.

Once I arrived home in the wee hours, I discovered I was unable to wind down and sleep until about 4:30 am. With no energy to go anywhere or do anything, I am paying the price of last night's indulgence today. I have all kinds of ambitions for altering my sleep pattern, so I don't relax into becoming a lazy bum. I just need to find something really exciting to do in the morning to motivate me to get started. Evenings and afternoons aren't a problem, but getting going in the morning is the major challenge of retirement. What I'd like to do is get out of bed and start my day soon after my eyes first open, even if this occurs as early as 6:00 am. Certainly beats just lying in bed until early afternoon. When I have no place specific to be before noon, I can always nap or siesta later after a hopefully productive morning. I could start my day by checking my emails to see whom I might connect with first thing, at least on the page. I'd really appreciate some brunch companions, so I'd have friendly faces to begin my day. Or I could practice German. Or I could even do as Julia Cameron suggests and complete three longhand morning pages to kickstart my ideas and writing early in the day.

But here's the thing about leaving my job. It genuinely felt like a kind of death. I had to force myself to drive to campus and face the endless climb up the stairs to my supervisor. Just as I entered the learning center, she looked up and saw me through the glass windows of her office, whereupon she put on her mask, jumped up from her desk, dashed over to open the door, and then stepped forward to completely block the entrance to her office before saying "hello." In her defense, I'd failed to notify her I was coming. I think she was quite surprised to see me and needed to take a step back from my sudden retirement announcement. She observed my sadness and rightly concluded what I needed was a hug. She said she'd like to give me one, but these being Covid times, the hug she gave me could only be mimed.

The campus was beautiful, spring-like. There were leaves on the trees, and some even blossomed. Outwardly the day was perfect; the weather was just right, the sun was just right, and the lake was sparkling. Inwardly all I felt was a profound sense of loss.

Will I ever get over these feelings of nausea and a kind of abandonment? It's as if I were being terminated, rather than leaving voluntarily. But this just doesn't feel voluntary. What can I do? Would I be happy if I worked longer? Or might that be a case of my going backward and failing to take control of a different but potentially satisfying future? Could I possibly get cleaning the house and my doc appointments out of the way in a few weeks, unretire, and return in the fall? Or am I just spinning my wheels, afraid of facing change?

I will miss my student S-, right on the cusp of life and all its excitement. He wants to learn languages and go into politics and see the world. And he loves his film class and exploring his own and others' ideas. And he's going to Europe for the first time with his dad this summer. And I'll miss K- who shared with me her love of dance and her interest in Ireland and its history, as well as her feelings about the desperate situation in Ukraine. And, of course, my other student S- who picked out all those magnificent art works for his humanities class, and we analyzed them and learned so much together.

But now it's now been over a month since I told my boss of my plans to retire, and I'm beginning to feel somewhat better. With the help of friends, I'll survive and possibly even thrive. My good friend Larry questioned my idea of unretiring, asking if I really had the luxury of changing my decision, as taking my pension now seems by far to be the best financial option. I guess I needed that dose of reality. I will miss my students. Going to Oakton after two years of working remotely made me realize how much I miss the beautiful campus as well.

My boss has kindly offered to host a retirement party for me. I told her, "not now!" I am still too tender and raw to face a party celebrating what I didn't want to do in the first place.

And I believe she understands.

###

### **PHONEVISION...rescue or ruin for TV?**

**By J. Smetana**

Miss Klott said we gotta OBSERVE...then go from there.

I think Miss Klott is right, Peaches.

Do you think that's the way to get groovy?

It's part of the way, Peaches. It's a good beginning. Remember: Grooviness is the journey, not the destination.

###

**The Observer**  
**By Pauline Bastek**

It was time for the final visit to the planet they called, Earth. The instructions were very clear that their function was to observe and report their findings. Only their observations were to be considered in determining the future of the planet.

It had become evident that the future of the planet was in jeopardy. Climate change would soon cause it to spiral in an irreversible pattern and make it uninhabitable for its occupants. This combined with an increase in population growth would create a situation where the quality of life presently enjoyed by the inhabitants would be unsustainable.

The question being considered by the council was tie. Time was limited.

The resources available could be marshaled if the inhabitants changed course in the areas of population growth and climate change policies. Sixty years ago, their leader, a former General, had warned them to beware of a military industrial combine which would irreparably harm them. Slowly but surely his predictions had come to pass.

The observers did as they were instructed and returned.

It was the end of the sixth month of the planet's calendar. The ruling body of the Planet Earth had determined that former legal precedents would be ignored and political agenda benefitting the minority ruling class would hold stay. The planet would proceed on a downward trajectory. The observers reported to the council of the galaxies. Based on their observations, it was decided that assistance to the planet would be counter-productive to the interest of the Galaxy. The observers would return to earth in six months after the planet held its mid-term elections. They would observe the results. Should the minority interests again determine the course of the planet, no further action by the Galaxy would be needed. The resources of the Galaxy would be directed elsewhere.

In the event the observers reported a change in course of the majority taking charge, due consideration would be given to Planet Earth's continued existence.

The observers will return and a galactic decision will be made before the end of the calendar year of Planet Earth.

###

**Different Person**  
**By Kelly Tansor**

I run into a lot of people from high school working at the local bar. Tonight, though, is the first time I've ever seen Marie come in. Even though she looks taller and slightly thinner than she did in high school, I recognize her round face and short, curly brown hair. She walks straight to the bar and folds her arms on the table as she talks to the bartender. She smiles as she orders her drink. She is dressed in a white polo and black skirt, probably just getting out of wherever she works.

It's been five years since we graduated high school. I wonder how she has been since then. I know a lot of people gave her a hard time back in high school. I hope she is doing better now.

I decide to take my break a little earlier today. I ask my co-worker to cover my tables for me and I take a seat next to Marie. By now she has paid for her drink – one of those fruity vodka drinks. She is looking at her phone while keeping her hand on her glass.

“Uh, hi, Marie,” I say to her quietly.

She looks up at me and her eyebrows crease. “Kevin?” she says flatly.

“That’s me,” I say, smiling. “I wasn’t sure if you’d remember me.”

“Oh, I remember *you*.” She lays her phone flat on the bar and sips her drink, keeping her eyes downcast.

“Yeah...” My voice trails off. “So how have you been?”

She nods. “Fine. You know, I didn’t know you work here.”

“Yeah, I’m a waiter.”

“Good for you.”

She responds quickly to everything, and struggles to maintain eye contact with me. Still, I keep trying to engage in conversation.

“So, what do you do now?”

“Uh, I work in payroll.”

“That’s cool. Where at?”

She points outside. “That, uh, investment bank down the street from here.”

She still sounds disinterested. I stare down at my hands as she drinks the last of her drink.

“Look, Kevin,” she says, “do you remember *anything* from high school?”

I look at her dumbfounded. “What’s that supposed to mean? Of course, I remember high school. That’s why I want to know how you’re doing. I know how much crap you got back in high school.”

“Yeah, from people like *you*.”

Her words hit me like a dagger, and I am taken aback. What could she be talking about? High school was so long ago, why would any of it matter to her now?

She continues. “The teasing, the name-calling, the graffiti on my locker, the fake love letters you wrote to me that made me think I had a secret *admirer*? Don’t you remember *any* of that?”

I think back to everything she mentions. But I don’t remember it through my own eyes. It feels like I am outside of myself, observing my actions from afar.

In high school, we found out Marie never had a boyfriend. She was a virgin. What a loser. My friends and I would shout “*Virgin!*” any time we saw her. Hey, it caught her attention. It got to the point where she responded to Virgin faster than she would to Marie. We even wrote it on her locker, just to make it clear to everyone whose locker it was. Along with some...drawings of things she probably had never seen before. I didn’t make those drawings – way too childish – but it was funny to watch my friends do it.

We took it a step further one year, just before Valentine’s Day. We wrote love letters from a “secret admirer” and dropped them in her locker. All the mushy crap girls fall for. You’re so beautiful. I understand you. You’re pretty even without makeup. Basically, anything you could pull out of a Bruno Mars song.

And then the kicker – we told her to meet at the park bench on Valentine’s Day. She must have sat there for an hour and a half while we all watched half a block away. She was freezing her ass off waiting for a guy that never showed. She was so gullible! I can’t believe she wasted her whole Valentine’s Day sitting on a park bench for no reason!

I watch my past self do these things to Marie. I can’t believe I would ever do something like that to someone. Why would I ever treat someone so horribly?

“Marie,” I say sternly. “I was a different person back then; you have to know that.”

“Mmm, no, that was still you,” she retorts.

“No, it wasn’t,” I insist. “That wasn’t me. I don’t even know who that guy *was*.”

She leans in closer to me. “It was *you*, Kevin. You did those things. You and your friends.”

I sigh. “Marie, that was a very long time ago. I’ve changed since then. I don’t even recognize the person I was back then.”

Marie turns in her chair so she is fully facing me. “Well, Kevin, I recognize that person. It was still you. Sure, you may be different now, but I still remember what you all did to me. I still have to live with that every day. And you? You get to sit there and act like it never happened.”

“Marie, I -”

“Learn to take accountability, Kevin. Not just avoid it all for five years and pretend it never happened.”

With that, she leaves.

I know I’ve grown and changed since high school. The new me would have kicked the old me’s ass. The old me was immature and tried way too hard to be cool. That’s not me anymore. I hope that Marie will one day be able to see that and move on.

###

## **“Heroes on Trial: A Tiger and Bunny Adventure”**

**By Mark Moe**

Citizens of Sternbild, Apollo Media is proud to present Hero TV! Welcome to the next exciting second part of Hero TV season two! As you saw in the first half of this season, we have introduced four new heroes and based off the success of the first duo of Wild Tiger and Barnaby Brooks Jr, we have paired all of our heroes with a partner. Now the six hero teams of Blue Rose and Golden Ryan, He is Thomas and Mr. Black, Sky High and Fire Emblem, Dragon Kid and Magical Cat, Origami Cyclone and Rock Bison and the original duo of Wild Tiger and Barnaby

are now combing their powers to battle their way to the top of the rankings to become the Kings of Heroes! Let's bring you back to the action!

Another armed bank robbery has happened on the west side of Sternbild. We have alerted our hero teams and now let's sit back and see who arrives on the scene first. Viewers we didn't have to wait long because, here comes the sexy Blue Rose and her golden armored partner, Golden Ryan! These criminals are in trouble now!

"My ice is a little cold, but your crimes have been completely put on hold!" exclaimed Blue Rose as she froze the escaping dingy, white cargo van in its tracks. The nine criminals inside managed to pile out of the van and ran with large bags of money in their hands scattering like rats in different directions. "Kiss my golden boots!" exclaimed Golden Ryan as he created massive tremors under the ground targeting three of the nine individuals causing them to lose their footing and fall on top of each other in a piled-up mess.

Wow what teamwork! Blue Rose managed to stop the van of bank robbers and her partner Golden Ryan captured three of the nine criminals! Six criminals remain, but four have managed to hijack new vehicles, while the other two made it to the harbor and have commandeered a speed boat! Let's *"observe"* what happens next.

"Heroes, this is Agnes in the control room. I need Sky-High and Fire Emblem to go after the criminals who continued in a car down 21<sup>st</sup>, Tiger and Barnaby get those rats in the lake, Dragon Kid and Magical Cat go after the one heading South on Hayes Ave, Rock Bison and Origami Cyclone focus your attention on the one going East on 31<sup>st</sup>. Finally, He is Thomas and Mr. Black capture the one racing down Main St. on a motorcycle. Make sure you all wait for the camera crews, before you make the arrests, especially you Wild Tiger!"

"A real hero doesn't wait for a camera crew when lives are at stake," responded Wild Tiger.

"Tiger, I mean it. Wait for the crew so that we can get the live shot of the capture. Don't mess with our ratings!" Agnes retorted.

As Tiger and Barnaby approached the harbor on their two-person combined motorcycle, the pair used the vision enhancements in their helmets to scour the lake for the runaway criminals. "Why do these guys always think they will get away in a boat? I mean it is a big lake, but it is still a lake, right partner?" Barnaby looked over to Wild Tiger in the emerald green and white armor and said, "This is where the fun begins!" The duo activated their hundred power which increase their abilities by a factor of one hundred, although it only lasts for five minutes. They dismounted off their combined motorcycle and raced onto the lake on foot in pursuit of the runaway robbers.

A couple of hours later, all the robbers had been captured and arrested by the various hero teams. "Good job, Heroes! We caught all the robbers and the money is being returned after their trials resolve in the Justice System. Speaking of which, Yuri Petrov the lawyer for Hero TV at the Hall of Justice, will be scheduling times to meet with him and his secretary individually

regarding a certain incident a few weeks back,” stated Agnes the Hero TV producer. “So, stop by his office to finalize the details.”

Wild Tiger was the last one to stop by Yuri’s Office because, he was pretty sure that the incident probably involved him. He was concerned that the incident could potentially end his career as a hero. Fortunately, Yuri had dedicated the next two days of his schedule to interview everyone with a conference interview for all the heroes at a later date.

His secretary, a blonde-haired, thirty-something year old woman named Julie, gave Wild Tiger a meeting time either before Blue Rose or after his partner, Barnaby. “I guess I will take the 10:00 a.m. appointment before Blue Rose,” Wild Tiger responded cautiously. “Sure thing, Mr. Tiger. I will call to remind you of the meeting at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday.”

True to her word, Julie called Wild Tiger to remind him of the meeting two hours before the actual meeting. He quickly showered and put on his trademark green and white suit with matching green hat and went to Yuri’s office in the Hall of Justice. “Mr. Tiger, Yuri will see you now,” responded Julie. As he was stepping into the office, he saw Blue Rose arriving to wait in the lobby for her meeting. She acknowledged Wild Tiger with a wave and went to sit down. Yuri closed the door and sat down across from Wild Tiger at his desk. His long platinum-silver hair was held up in a ponytail and his face held almost a permanent blank stare across it. Every time Wild Tiger met with him, it was difficult to get a read on him as an individual. He always seemed so closed and mysterious. When he speaks, it was always nearly monotone and without any hint of emotion. As he wondered what Yuri would say, he heard him state,

“Wild Tiger also known as Kotetsu Koburagi, this is a preliminary meeting where myself and Julie will take a statement regarding an incident three weeks ago concerning a super villain N.E.X.T. using his power to animate large statues and go on a destructive spree across the city. After this round of meetings is done, we will hold a conference meeting with all the heroes to prep you for an upcoming civil trial regarding this incident.”

“Wait, did you say trial? Why would this need our involvement? We’re heroes! Isn’t this your arena? Are we acting as witnesses or something?” Tiger asked.

“Partially as witnesses, but there is a larger accountability issue that the city is bringing concerning the collateral damage as a result of the heroes’ actions during criminal events. This is essentially a civil audit with possible actions that could be brought in the future,” Yuri replied.

“What sort of actions are they considering in the future? Will this end our careers as heroes? I have a daughter to support,” replied Wild Tiger.

Yuri shook his head “no” and said, “The city wants to hold you accountable and take proactive measures to minimize collateral damage. They are also looking to place the heroes into a catastrophic group insurance policy.”

“Oh, come on Mr. Petrov, the city wants a catastrophic insurance rider on us? We don’t cause that much damage, right?” asked Tiger.

A scowl appeared on the lawyer's face as he said, "As a whole group no, but you Wild Tiger have a habit of overdoing it in a way that is exponentially worse than the rest. In fact, the city wants you to carry an additional solo rider beyond the basic group one for everyone."

"Why am I the only one with a solo rider? Fire Emblem and Sky-High cause a lot of damage as well," Tiger responded.

Yuri's scowl grew more pronounced and a noticeable vein popped out on his forehead. Wild Tiger immediately started to stammer and said, "Are we done here? I mean I have another appointment. I have to meet up with my daughter, Kaede."

His face returned to his normal impassive, almost blank stare and he said, "We are done for now. Make sure you keep your schedule open for the conference session. Julie will give you a date as you go out. Don't worry we will reschedule if you and the rest of the heroes are summoned for an emergency," replied Yuri.

When the conference session happened a week later, all of the heroes were visibly nervous. The pre-trial rehearsal was nerve-wracking especially for Wild Tiger, but the heroes were ready for the trial. They knew what to expect from the prosecution and were even briefed on the different personalities of the trial attorneys and the judge as well.

At the trial, the lead prosecutor Barry King asked each hero individually what their N.E.X.T. superpower was and the length of time that they were employed as heroes working for Apollo Media. The heroes had to arrive wearing civilian attire, but the Court allowed the heroes to use a discreet entrance so as to not cause a massive disturbance of the other trials going on at the same time. Mark Moe

###

### **"The Witch from Little Witch Academia"**

**By Megan Moe**

Hi, I am Akko from Little Witch Academia. I am new to this school. I don't know how to use magic with my wand. These are my friends, Sucy and Lotte. They are not only my friends, but they are also roommates. Sucy is the creepiest girl I know with an obsession of collecting poisonous mushrooms. Lotte comes from a family of magical potion creators who have a shop in a nearby village. She is also the biggest nerd I know. I work very hard learning magic, but I can not hardly fly my broom.

Diana is the best student in the school. She knows every spell and she never messed up like me. I consider her to be my rival, but she is sassy and snobby. She has long, blonde hair with tea green highlights and bright blue eyes. I tried to *"observe"* Diana practicing her spells, but it just frustrated me because of how easy she makes everything look.

My next test is coming up in magic spell casting with Professor Ursula. She told us it would cover basic elemental casting. I want to really one up Diana and I am actually going to the library to look for a spell that will put Diana's demonstration to shame. When I asked the librarian to direct me to a book of advanced elemental spells, she refused. She said, "Akko, you are not powerful enough to do those spells. Why don't you stick to Spark or Drip?"

I got really angry and frustrated at her. When she went to help another student, I ran off with the advanced spells book. "I'll show her and especially I will prove to Diana that I belong in this school," thought Akko in her mind.

When I got back to my dorm, I started to tear through the pages and found the perfect spell: Firestorm. I worked hard to learn the words to the spell and get the casting components. The day of the test, Diana went first. She used her wand to and casted a complex elemental spell that involved creating a mini tornado made up of fire, water and air elements. Professor Ursula had me go last because she wanted to make sure that the other students finish their demonstrations before I blow everyone away with my great spell, quite literally.

###