

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 for information. [The Pen & Ink Writer's Group returned to the Eisenhower Library on July 18, 2022.](#)

Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group
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Pen & Ink Writers' Group Meeting
February 20, 2023
Word: Imposter/Impostor

The Young Adventurers
By Mark Moe

Tony Stark worked on the fuel compression ratio on his Indy 500 race car. Two fuel cylinders out of eight still needed work to bring it back to optimal performance. Jarvis monitored his master's progress ready to assist Tony in any way he required. His master enjoyed working on his cars and often when he worked on them his mind would solve bigger problems. "Jarvis, are you there?"

"For you sir, always. What do you need Mr. Stark?"

"Have you noticed that we have several new younger Avengers joining our ranks? I think we have enough to form their own team."

He replied, "Excuse me sir, but do the Avengers need another team within their ranks? Would that create confusion among the current members? Would you or another one of the original Avengers lead this new team?"

"In response to your question, this team is not separate from the main Avengers group. I see this team as a way to give our younger heroes more team experience. In fact, the teens would appreciate the opportunity to work with heroes closer to their age. As for a leader, it will not be any of the original six Avengers. I think it is time to turn the reigns of leadership over to our friend, Peter Parker."

"Shall I compile a list of young heroes to interview for you, sir?"

"That sounds too formal for teenagers. How about we schedule a pizza party for them and I will interview them at the party. Teenagers still love pizza, right?"

"From what I have observed, yes sir. Will there be anything else, Mr. Stark? If not, I shall carry out your orders."

Per Mr. Stark's standing security concerns, he paid the establishment an exorbitant sum to have it closed for a private party. "Sir, the pizza party is tonight at 7:00 p.m. Since it is on Bleeker Street, I have taken the liberty of sending an invite to Dr. Strange as well. He has responded that he will be attending as well."

Tony shook his head and asked, "Are any of our new recruits even practitioners of the Mystic Arts that would warrant even having a wizard present?"

"No, sir, but Dr. Strange can assist in ensuring the heroes that show up all indeed are real and not "imposters. " I know that is a recent concern with you because of the recent Skrull attacks and the numerous reports I have been tracking dealing with shape-shifting Skrulls replacing leaders around the world."

"Jarvis, you know me so well. Fine. I am cool with the Sorcerer Supreme showing up and having a couple of slices of pizza. He might prove useful as you say. I will leave Avengers Tower at 6:45 p.m. to head over to Bleeker."

"I will set an alarm to remind you, sir."

Just as Jarvis promised, he alerted his boss about the party five minutes before he was set to walk out the door. Tony headed to the elevator took it to the garage level and hopped into his 2019 metallic cobalt Audi E-Tron GT. He drove the short distance to Bleeker Street Pizza to meet up with the young heroes. He found a parking spot and exited his vehicle. The owner recognized Tony and opened the door to welcome him.

"Mr. Stark. I wanted to let you know that we will have your party back in our only banquet room. I apologize for it being simple and modest in its decoration. We do most of our business at the front counter and deliveries throughout two of New York's burrows."

"No, I understand. Go ahead and set up for ten people back there. I am going to wait up here. Can you bring me a Pepsi with no ice?"

He responded, "Sure thing Mr. Stark."

While Tony sipped his Pepsi from a clear plastic glass with the Bleeker Street Pizza logo emblazoned upon it, Dr. Steven Strange arrived first and was also greeted by the owner. Seeing the Sorcerer Supreme in a pair of blue jeans and a gray hoodie was a little unnerving. Tony knew it was a well-crafted illusion having fought side by side with the Mystic wizard on many occasions. An illusion that the good Doctor could drop in three seconds and reveal his true outfit and that amazing Cloak of Levitation which Tony has called, "an incredibly loyal piece of hardware" because the Cloak is sentient. The owner directed him to sit down across from Tony and offered him a drink as well.

As the owner placed a raspberry tea in front of Dr. Strange, he waited for the middle-aged man to leave before he turned his attention back to Tony and asked, "So I know you have something more planned than just inviting for me to share a couple of slices of pizza together. What is really going on, Tony? Jarvis was unusually cryptic and said 'that my presence was requested to enjoy some pizza and meet some new Avenger recruits. What am I really doing here, Tony?'"

"You know the threat we have faced dealing with shape-shifting Skrulls attempting to replace important leaders throughout the world, right? Now we believe that they are trying to find opportunities to replace Avengers as well."

"So, you need my help to ensure that these new recruits have not been replaced by Skrulls, right? I can do that easy enough. I will just setup a magic cancelation barrier for all your recruits to walk through before they go into the banquet room. It will negate any natural shape-shifting abilities and expose the Skrulls."

"Thank you, Steven. Here is the list of heroes who are coming tonight. We are expecting eight."

"Let's see you have: Peter Parker, Gwen Stacy, Miles Morales, Kate Bishop, Vivian Vision, America Chavez, Cassie Lang and Riri Williams. It sounds like the Converse Shoe Brigade."

###

Imposter
By Edward Scheffler

One who assumes an identity not
of his own for the purpose of
deception is called
a Trickster.

Such was the Men's Fellowship gathering with
the song "I want to be a Macho Man"
A Mach...Mach...
Macho Man.

As each was smartly dressed in flannel shirts and
construction boots.
Brad had three dogs, a hunting knife, and a collection
of guns

Then Brad exhibited hospitality by passing around a
box of cigars – with a swig of brandy.

“Damn Smart”

It was said as we swore an oath to the cause.

To the occasion of deceptive measures.
To a fraudulent fellowship in which each of us was
playing this game intent to mimic one other.

###

The Imposter **By Vicki Elberfeld**

I originally found the notion of an imposter syndrome quite relatable. That fear of being found out, that you're really not as knowledgeable, talented, sensitive, or even as accomplished at your job as you might appear to be. Once I retired, I became less and less concerned with my own imposter syndrome. If I were found out, losing a job would have been a big deal, but other folks learning I'm not all *that* seems to be far less serious. What are the expectations of retired folks anyway - that we go to sleep and wake up whenever we feel like, that our weekdays bear a strong resemblance to our weekends, and that we aren't evaluated quarterly or even annually?

After giving it more thought however, I am convinced that I am more than simply a person no longer employed. After all, I do leave the house from time to time (though never early in the morning), interact with friends, vote, pay bills, attempt to keep up with medical appointments, and attend lectures, discussions, and performances. None of this is easy anymore post Covid shutdown because some of these activities require me to keep good records, drive my car, take a bath, and behave like a civilized human. Positively exhausting!

So where does my imposter syndrome come in? First of all, I pretend to be rational. Actually, every day that I'm out in public, I most usually suppress intense uncomfortable emotions, commonly brought up in discussions about politics or religion, and will only speak at such times when I'm on the same page as the folks surrounding me and not on the opposite page. Not that I never disagree, but in such situations I am not only polite but speak from my head and not my heart, trying to leave the impression that I really don't care much either way. I want my audience to think "it don't make me no never mind," so I can appear (almost) cool, calm, and collected.

Other times I feel like an imposter are those occasions where I try to leave the impression I'm on top of things. After all, I live in a respectable house in a respectable neighborhood, have committed no crimes, never received more than a very occasional traffic ticket, am averse to public scenes and scandals, and I pay my bills (although not absolutely on time unless they're credit cards in which case I hate the penalties for late payments so much, I'm actually pretty timely). I'm not at all on top of clutter in my house. The Covid pandemic lockdown left me free to lock my doors and refrain from inviting friends over. My friend shared the expression with me, "Company Cleans House." I thought that meant your friends came over to clean your house for you, but no. She meant that when you're awaiting your company, you clean your house out of respect for your guests, and to put your best foot forward to provide them with a pleasant experience. But for me that often involved bagging up my clutter and shoving it in closets, and under beds at the last minute. Thanks to the Covid shutdown I stopped having company and let tidiness go altogether, and once restrictions eased, I looked around my house and doubted whether I could ever make it company ready again. Just yesterday, my phone awakened me, and in utter carelessness, scrambling to get out of bed to answer it, the entire wireless phone set fell with my only handset jumping out of its cradle onto the floor and disappeared among the clutter. I struggled and struggled and haven't been able to find it or make any calls. It blends in so well with the other clutter. So much for being on top of things.

Finally, I am an imposter when it comes to sensitivity and being a good listener. Personally I am just the opposite of a private person. I wear my heart on my sleeve and most folks, friends and strangers alike, have ringside seats (whether they want them or not) to my conflicts and struggles. Likewise, I want the folks around me to feel comfortable sharing their burdens. I rarely offer advice as I believe nothing is more useless, but I see no reason not to offer my sympathy and my interest. No reason, that is, apart from my distractibility and tendency to feel emotionally overwhelmed. One friend, for example, has been complaining of his significant other relationship throughout all the decades I have known him. His partner actually seems to be quite a helpful and caring person, although my not being directly inside the relationship means there is much I likely can't see. I can feel for my friend who is obviously in pain and needing to vent; I just can't seem to take in and concentrate on the actual words he is saying. I know he will never leave his partner, and so my mind drifts off to my grocery lists, my reading and writing projects, or the sitcoms I watched on that particular day, as I periodically mutter "uh huh" and nod my head up and down.

I don't outright plan to deceive my friends and relatives. I dearly want to be a more effective listener and to keep better records and a more organized home. A friend of mine has the raw honesty to reply, after I've asked him a question which he, in his distraction, can't begin to answer, yet continues to fill me with envy as he says "I am afraid I wasn't listening to you. Would you repeat that for me?"

But I doubt I'll ever reach that level of candor, and perhaps I don't really want to. I tell myself I deviate from honesty only because I want to spare others' feelings, but that's not the only reason. Most often I want to spare my own feelings by not telling difficult truths and not exposing how much I miss the target of being a kind and sincere person. I once struggled to

come up with an answer to the question, “Which is more important to you, honesty or tact?” and I finally settled on, “tact.”

Spoken like a true imposter!

###

The Imposter in Me **By N. Stewart**

The restaurant was peaceful after the lunch rush as Ellie and Grace sat at the table by the window. People hurried passed on the sidewalk. The two looked outward. The conversation turned from the lightheartedness of everyday life to a more serious tone.

“I had this conversation with my yoga instructor the other day that shook me up a little,” said Ellie. It was after class and everyone had left. We drifted into conversation about yoga and exercising, then into more personal matters. I had been thinking I needed some impartial person to throw some thoughts at...”

Grace said, “You know I am a good listener and would be willing to...”

“I know, I know. We have been friends for many years and you have always been there for me, but this time I thought I needed fresh ears to hear what I was trying to say - some one that hasn’t heard me complain over and over again about the same things and yet do nothing about changing any of it.

Anyway, we started talking that mothers and fathers have a large influence over their children as they grow up and those ideas and actions carry forward into our own adult relationships. I told her I had a few really good, long-time friends but didn’t do well with making new relationships in general. She asked about my mother and my first thought was “here we go again” always blame the parent. But I answered that I didn’t exactly get along with my mother. She asked how I reacted to my mother when she approached me when I was young. I said that I would stand still and not participate in my mother’s outpourings. I didn’t know what to do or how to handle the emotions thrust upon me. It scared me. I was a little kid. I couldn’t speak back because she was my mother. Eventually, I would dissolve into a pool of putty, letting her win, then resenting her and myself for having done so. Finally, sheepishly creeping away to my bedroom, I would cry and snivel alone on my bed.

The yoga instructor asked if I had any other current relationships that I was having trouble dealing with, and I admitted I had. She asked a simple question whether I treated that relationship or any other the same way I did with the relationship I had with my mother. The light bulb went off in my head. Of course, I did. I’d stand by, frozen in the moment, struck down by the authority of the person, not knowing what to do, and ultimately giving in to the other’s demand, creeping away to loath and despise myself.”

“You are not alone in what you say. Others, too, have stood in your place, including me, but it was my father not my mother that I feared facing. But, please go on,” said Grace.

“My conversation with the yoga instructor ended, but the thought did not. It whirled and whirled around in my brain. Then, I awoke one morning, knowing that I was an imposter, being one way in my world and being another in the eyes of others. I’m still that little girl that stands in fear in front of assumed or true authority and knows not what to do or how to speak up for me.

I fear we are all imposters, pretending to the world that we are something more than what we are. It’s easier that way. I have learned to put a false face to the world, protecting me from emotional or abusive hurt, showing no amount of human weakness or frailty to anyone.”

“Yes,” Grace said, “I think to some extent we are all imposters. Now that you know and are aware, then you can work on ways to overcome and assert your thoughts with others. It will take practice. It won’t work all the time and some toes may get stepped on. Life is a learning process that never ends.”

“A true statement,” said Ellie. “I think we will have to leave it at that. The waiter has been eying us for some time. We better pay the check,” she said, calling the waiter over. “Thanks, Grace, for your words of wisdom. You are good friend.”

###

Imposter
By Carol Karvon

Alicia was suddenly startled by someone pounding on her front door.

When she looked through the peephole, she saw a tall man on her porch. She knew immediately he was a stranger but yet there was something familiar about him. Her doorbell gave up the ghost years ago so friends and relatives always called her when they were coming to visit. No one had called her on this day.

She was very suspicious of who was standing on her porch, but curiosity got the better of her and she had to ask.

“Who is it? If you’re selling something, go away. I don’t need or want anything.” She told the stranger

“It’s me, your brother,” the man said.

“What? Who are you? I don’t have a brother, not that I know of anyway. How can I be sure you’re not an imposter?” Alicia wanted to know more but wasn’t ready to open the door, at least not until she had more proof of this man’s identity.

Even though he looked a little familiar she wasn't sure he was really who he claimed to be or an imposter who had fabricated a story to get into her home.

Her parents never mentioned having another child, a son, her brother. If he were genuine, where had he been all her life?

Tim (he told her that was his name) must have read her mind because he said he'd just found out recently he had a sister and was just as puzzled as she was. If it were true, he wanted to meet her and that's why he was now standing at her door.

Tim told Alicia he was in town at a business conference and saw her on TV. She was a newscaster on the evening news. He was stuck by the physical resemblance to himself, almost like a sister. They had the same coloring of skin, hair and eyes.

He had to find out who she was and called his parents to ask if they knew of Alicia and how much she resembled him. They said as soon as he got home, they needed to talk to him.

For the first time in his life, his parents acknowledged he was adopted when he was a newborn. It was an open adoption. They knew his birth parents and had kept in touch with them for several years. Through the years, they had sent his birth parents pictures, copies of report cards showing his progress in school, and other miscellaneous things including little anecdotes, day-to-day things all parents are interested in.

When Tim was a teenager his birth parents asked his adoptive parents, (mom and dad), to stop sending anything. It was much too painful to know Tim was so close, but unreachable. So, for the last several years the four parents did not have contact with each other.

He found out his birth parents were teenagers and unmarried when he was born. Putting him up for adoption was the most difficult decision they ever had to make but agreed it was the responsible thing to do and best for the baby. Since then, they married and had another child a few years later, Alicia.

By the time he worked up the courage to contact Alicia, he had lived with this information for a couple of weeks, letting it sink in. Had he given it more thought, he'd have found a softer, kinder way to approach her and tell her the whole story. He wouldn't have sprung this huge surprise on her. He was so just excited to find her and talk to her he didn't realize how the news might affect her.

For Alicia's part, once she got over the shock, she invited him into her home to meet her family. She told him she'd always wanted a big brother and was so happy he sought her out because of that newscast. Tim and Alicia found time to visit every few weeks after that. She was so glad she finally had her big brother and he was the real deal, not an imposter.

###

Imposter Syndrome By Kelly Tansor

Over the weekend, I don't even touch my guitar. The thought of re-visiting my song sends a shiver down my spine. On Monday after school, though, I finally muster up the courage to play through the whole song again. It's not that bad, I guess, but it's not as impressive or earth-shattering as I thought it was when I first wrote it. I consider changing a few lyrics, but I'm unable to come up with anything better without changing the entire message. I think about skipping the talent show on Friday, but my mom has already invited practically my whole family to see it.

I realize there is no backing out now, so during the week I continue to practice the song a couple times a day so I don't forget it for Friday. But I don't feel as "in love" with the song as I used to feel. Maybe Cliff will have some advice.

On Thursday, I have my regular guitar lesson with Cliff. After my guitar is in tune and we've gone through a couple scales, he asks, "So, how are you feeling about your talent show? It's tomorrow, right?"

I cover my face in my hands and groan. "Cliff, I'm not sure what happened," I admit. "Last week, I was *so* psyched about this thing. I was ready to show it to the entire world. But now...I don't know, it's like...is it even that good? Would anyone really like it? I know my parents said they did, but they're my *parents*. They're *supposed* to say that."

Cliff sighs and puts his hands on his knees, like he just heard some big news. "Well, first off," he says, "I think it's great you have such a supportive family. You'd be surprised how many musicians I've seen that don't have that, and it's sad."

"Well, now my whole family is coming to see me," I explain. "Hell, the whole *school* will be there. What if they hear my song and think, 'Oh, he sucks,' or, 'Oh, he can't really play,' or, 'Oh, these lyrics are so childish.'"

Cliff nods. "I think I see what's happening here. You think people are going to see you as not a great musician? And that anyone who complimented your song so far was just making it up?"

My mouth starts to drop. "Well...yeah, exactly that."

Cliff leans in closer to me. "Tom, I think you're showing signs of something called, 'imposter syndrome.' This happens to all kinds of creative people, not just musicians. Basically, you start to think that you're not actually that great, you only got as far as you did out of luck, and soon that luck is going to run out. Now, stop me if I'm off-track -"

"No, you're pretty much hitting the nail on the head," I say, impressed.

Cliff explains, “I’ve seen this come up a lot, especially with songwriters. Sometimes, after you’ve played the same song over and over again, or when it takes a long time to write a song, it’s easy to kind of...get tired of it. It loses its spark. And, you know, that happens. You ever hear a song somewhere, decide it’s your favorite song, and you play it on repeat for days on end?”

“Oh, yeah, all the time!”

“It’s a lot like that. But think of it this way - your audience hasn’t heard this song a billion times a day. This will be the first time they ever heard it. And, who knows? Maybe it’ll feel just as amazing as it felt to you when you first wrote it.”

“I wasn’t so sure when we played it at rehearsal last week. Everyone just...stared. Like, with no expression on their face.”

Cliff leans back, considering what he is about to say. “You know, I’ve played at a lot of places - churches, retirement homes, rock venues. You can’t really judge a person’s face all the time. Like, we can’t read these people’s minds. Maybe they’re tired. Maybe they’re focused. Maybe that’s just their face! Again, we can’t read their minds.” He leans in closer and lowers his voice. “Plus, I have plenty of students around your age. They all look at me like that. After a while, you learn not to take it personally.”

I nod, considering this. “I guess you’re right. I think I may have had the same face while everyone else performed.”

“And, again, I’m sure they didn’t take it personally.” Cliff sits up straight. “I’ll tell you one other thing I’ve learned in my years of performing. Even if your song *does* suck, even if the lyrics *are* childish or simple. At the end of the day, that’s not what the audience is going to take away. One of the main things an audience member looks for is *passion*. Does this guy look like he knows what he’s talking about? Does this guy enjoy what he’s doing? Does this guy *feel* the song like *I* feel the song? Or is he just going through the motions waiting for it to be over with?” Cliff pauses and I take this in. “Having that passion for what you’re playing. *That’s* what’s going to separate you from all these other white guys with a guitar - and believe me, I made a living off of being a white guy with a guitar!”

I smile. “Thanks, Cliff.”

“I really hope this helps, Tom,” he says. “So, why don’t we go over the song to make sure it’s performance-ready?”

###

View Photos of Thousand of Russian Beauties
By J. Smetana

I'll take Geography for eight hundred, please.

A once-great American city now completely destroyed by homosexuals with piles of human waste on every street corner.

What is San Francisco, California?

San Francisco is correct-

Peaches are you watching Jeopardy!?

Yeah.

Well turn it off. I want your complete undivided attention. Why did you call me anyway? It might be different if I called you!

Aunt Judy want to know if you got the RSVPs for dinner.

Yeah, well tell her I got most of them: Leonardo da Vinci, Sir Isaac Newton, Shakespeare, Gandhi, Egon Schiele, Hitler and Baby Jesus. The only one I'm still waiting on is Sonny Boy Williamson. I just hope we don't get an IMPOSTER.

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