

Pen & Ink Writers' Group

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 © 2015 Pen & Ink Writers' Group

August 2015 selection – Light

Doug and the Light By Jamey Damert

(A self-proclaimed dimwit of enlightenment)

Doug came upon a great void, and nothing at all filled the vast expanse that there was. Doug said, "Let there be something, and something he guessed there must have been, but he saw nothing due to the insufferable darkness.

Across the vastness of things came a loud voice that clearly suggested, "Why don't you take off your sunglasses?"

But Doug knew that he had no spectacles of any kind, not even buy-one-get-one-free prescription bifocals. And Doug wept, for he had nothing better to do. This was a very unDoug like thing to do, and he prayed that no one was watching, but people hadn't been invented yet, nor would they be for billions and billions of years, more years than one could be expected to count in an average lifetime, not even with all your modern medical tomfoolery.

But alas! I have gotten muchly and sadly off the point. Bibles should be succinct and to the point, but this one I am writing seems to be far off the mark. I'll try to do better in paragraphs that upcome. I can hardly do worse, I'm thinking.

And Doug said, "Let there be stuff," and of a sudden there came stuff, bumping and banging into each other and establishing randomness for all time. But lo! Time hadn't been invented yet and would not be for billions and billions of years.

Doug could not see any of this, for vast darkness reigned over the universe in the unseen void. And this troubled Doug until he went and made a bold proclamation that

was to change things forever and irreversibly. Doug said, “Let there be light, and what came into view was waves of true light, not that wimpy artificial light powered by batteries (which would not come into existence for billions and billions of years), for the moment blinding poor Doug, who hadn’t a clue as to what was going on.

Yes. Truly, Doug was a man who knew not what heavenly powers he possessed. But now that he could clearly see what he was doing, he quickly began making things. First came one- celled animals, then simple weeds and plants, and before you knew what was happening up came dinosaurs thundering about.

And Doug saw that all of this was good, and so he created Adam and Eve, who went ahead and muddled things up for all future generations to come. And he saw that this wasn’t so good, but there wasn’t much he could do about it on account of this free will thing that sort of popped up out of nowhere. And Doug made lesser animals to procreate and fertilize the planet. Such were the giraffes and wart hogs and guppies and cockroaches, whose place it was to beautify and mess up the lives of humans.

And all this could not have come about without the light, for without that all manner of creatures would be constantly bumping into and falling over each other. And there would truly be mayhem. On some level, I think that would not be such a bad thing. Let’s give a big banging hand to Doug, the supreme almighty ruler of this stupid screwed-up universe. © August 2015 Jamey Damert - only 554 words (not quite a novel)

###

Be the Light in the Room **By Val Collins**

Be the light in the room. Come out of the shadows and illuminate the space. Radiate goodness with kind words and deeds thereby spreading a beacon of blessing on those surrounding the light.

Be the light in the room. Help hearts to soften towards one another as they are touched by the dazzle of virtuous conduct. Set the example through right-minded manner and create an atmosphere of tolerance that fills minds and souls.

Be the light in the room. As the sunrays cast early and late beauty upon the flower extolling the color and form, so too fill your space with radiance that extols the virtues of those within. In doing so we celebrate commonality and difference, individual and universal while adding a delectable richness to our lives.

Be the light in the room. Be the cheer to temper the gloom, the momentum for those in defeat, the strength to encourage the weakened spirit, the source of support to stimulate self-esteem.

Be the light in the room. Let laughter ring out in beams of radiance; let smiles shine bright with intoxicating invite. Let conversation gleam in harmonious utterance. Let the light shimmer and glisten with luster.

Be the change that sparks a new dawn. Be the joy that permeates with bright beams of benevolence. Be the harmony that sings out a chorus of sparkle. Be the serenity glowing soft and steady.

Be the light in the room.

Light
By Elvira Castillo

In “Our Daily Bread,” a ministry devotional pamphlet I read daily, part of the prayer for August 14 is thanking Jesus for being the “one true light that the darkness cannot extinguish in this chaotic world.” In the Bible John 8:12 Jesus said, “I am the light of the world, he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” I am not the author of any of these expressions regarding the light and darkness of this world, but I certainly believe our world sorely is in need of more light.

I’ve often said that my son and I live in the “Twilight Zone.” What I mean by that is we prefer to follow the life when morals were higher than they are in today’s world. We enjoy listening to “Old Time” radio shows, watch movies that have a good story and are not “R” rated, and like reading biographies about people who have contributed “light” and not “darkness” to our world.

I turned 80 years of age last month, and have a vivid memory of my life growing up. When I think of the innocence of yesterday and our world today, I shudder. I am so, so happy I grew up in the world of yesterday, and that I still have many friends from my growing-up era. My “friends are like angels on earth.” They are the light of my life, and when we see each other, I know there is some hope against the darkness of this world when people like this still exist. Not that only my friends are the light of the world. I know there are many good people in this world, who feel the same as we do, and hopefully one day darkness will be snuffed out and light brought back with peace, kindness, morality, respect, understanding and love for our fellow man. Perhaps our world will have to really go into deep darkness before we can appreciate our need for true light

Maybe love is the secret to light. So love one another and let there be light!

###

A Lighthearted Story
By: Susan J Wilfong

I had to turn on the light,
To see if my yogurt was lite.
You see, I had one of those days,
And I found myself in a daze.

My husband was acting like a bear,
Which was something I could no longer bare.
We decided to go to the creek,
But all my bones would do, is creak.

We drove past the trees and I saw a deer.
I excitedly shouted, “Look dear, a deer!”
Then he said, “Honey, I think I have the flu”.
So, back home we flew.

As he sat down, he started to groan.
I said, "Oh, give me a break, honey, you're grown".
But he's a man and oh so... male.
The next thing I knew, we had gotten our mail.

Early the next morning, I saw him through the mist.
He said he felt better and asked what he had missed.
To me, he still looked pale,
Especially when he saw his barf in the pail.

He just sighed
As I stood by his side.
He looked like he had lost some weight
I asked him to get on the scale, but he said I had to wait.

He wanted to go to the ocean and watch the tide
But he tripped over his shoelaces because they weren't tied.
He complained that he still felt quite weak.
He always seems to get sick at the end of the week.

We listened to the birds as they began to cheep.
This was something we liked to do and it was cheap.
As we silently listened, who would have guessed,
Our doorbell rang and we now have a guest.

I had just finished making some chocolate mousse.
When out from the trees emerged a very tall moose.
He scratched at a flea
As he started to flee.

He snorted at something as he passed.
I had never seen a moose up close in the past.
The last thing I saw of him was his flicking tail.
Which is a sign for me to end this tale.

So, this is my attempt at using homonyms.
It's something I just thought I would try.
It was a lot harder than writing my poetry.
This I will never deny.

For me, poetry comes easy.
The words just dance in my head.
Homonyms don't know how to dance.
I find that I trip over them instead.

###

Some Light
By Sara Schupack

Moonlight through dark forest trees. The moon's roundness is blocked by crooked branches. A curved horizon blends forest to sky or to deeper forest — it's hard to tell. The picture is done in charcoal, which softens the image, making it as inviting as scary. There are patches of misty moonlight, soft as cotton balls amongst the trees and haloed around the trees like hope.

I am not drawn in for comfort, though; it is the darkness, the mystery, even the danger, I think, that appeals to me. Moments of joy amongst struggle, happiness that sneaks through gloom, perhaps this seems more precious and valuable than long-term happiness which blends into complacency if you're not paying attention. The bad adds interest, texture, contrast for the good.

I try to imagine my mother making this picture. She usually does daytime images with color, peaceful landscapes or close up views that become abstract in an intellectually surprising, playful way. This one is very dark for her. She puts on a good face, only dropping little hints now and again when she is sad or not feeling well or disappointed in someone. You have to guess and fill in the blanks. Winters seem to have gotten longer and lonelier for her. Sleepless nights that she downplays must be adding up. She said once that she was afraid of going to bed, because she couldn't bear to face waking up only an hour or two after trying.

I picture her tossing and turning, and then getting practical. She is not a person to wallow or waste. She gets up, looking for a book to read, and spots the moon outside the window. It is brave and bright and attempts to ease shadows, but maybe cherishes those shadows too. My mom decides to make something of her darkness. She makes this painting and then in her usual generosity, one time when I'm visiting, says "pick out anything you want" I choose this one. I look at it every day. I try to picture her making it I try to understand why I'm drawn to it. But I don't try too hard. I cherish it

###

Have You Seen the Light?
By Mercedes Martinez

I wonder if Thomas Edison ever thought of light as 'multifaceted?' Let's see, there's the French translation, *Lumiere*; or perhaps, the Spanish translation, *Luz*; the Arabic translation, *Tejal* or the Polish translation, *Swiatlo* and the Italian translation *Luce*, to name a few.

What about the colloquialisms:

"Brother can you spare a light?"

"I have seen the light of day."

"I have seen the light!"

Then the spiritual perspective:

Mathew 5:14 - You are the *light* of the world.

Mathew 5:16 - Let your *light* so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven.

John 8:12 - Then spoke Jesus again to them, saying, I am the *light* of the world, he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the *light* of life.

Or...

“Be the light.” “The light of God’s presence.”

And...light is the root of other words...She was “enlightened.”

Then again, it rhymes with sight, slight, smite, tight, fight, might, night and last but not least, height.

Is light etheric by nature?

It seems ethereal.

So, tell me now, how do you describe the light in your life?

###

Why Chinese Don’t Suffer from Hair Loss By J. Smetana

Marge’s sister Peaches was playing Jarts with her kids on top of the Willis Tower when one of the Jarts flew over the edge (I could’ve told you) and stabbed Salman Rushdie in the neck killing him instantly. He’d had his head cocked at a funny angle, trying to read the Jewish Star newspaper while it was still inside the newspaper box. Why he didn’t take it out to read--it’s a free paper--I don’t know. Maybe he didn’t know it was a freebie or maybe he has a germ phobia and doesn’t like to touch public handles. Or maybe being the crazy Iranian bastard he is, he didn’t want to get into more hot water, trafficking with the Jews, and all that. Who knows? Why ask for trouble he might have thought.

Oh my God! Marge screamed. Oh my God! She said it again, her voice getting tight and stringy. She’s always been good at dealing with a crisis situation--as long as it’s happening on television’s “The Good Wife.” Get a grip, Margie Baby! I had to speak slowly and clearly. I knew she was shutting down so while she still had a few synapses firing, I concentrated my message, staring at her the way a Komodo dragon stares at a mouse: What we do in the next few seconds will determine the outcome of this thing, so let’s just turn the beat around, Vicki Sue Robinson. See this kid on a bicycle wearing chef pants approaching us with a satchel slung over his shoulder? That boy goes to cooking school and that bag contains sharp knives. Take my umbrella and jam it into the kid’s front bike wheel--make sure you both go down in a pile. Start screaming at top volume and don’t stop: in fact, get louder and crazier. Blow your rape whistle as you flail about. I need for him to be distracted for at least 30 seconds so I can get a chef’s knife out of his bag in order to cut off the head. We’re gonna need somewhere to put it, so pull that greasy Garrett popcorn bag out of that garbage can and then call the guy at the falafel

place on Wells Street. Tell him we're coming over with a certain bundle worth two-and-one-half million bucks. He'll want half but I know we can trust him.

Questions for group discussion:

Author refers to Mr. Rushdie as Iranian, but of course Mr. Rushdie is Indian. Is author misinformed or is he trying to "make a point"?

Author speaks somewhat harshly to Marge. Do you think this was necessary, or do you think a more compassionate, nurturing approach would have worked just as well?

Would you be willing to kill a popular author for a large cash reward (fatwa)? What's the least you'd take for doing the job on Joyce Carol Oates? Philip Roth?

###

Radiance and Roses
By N. Stewart

When you look into someone's eyes and you no longer see the light that once shined there, what do you do? What do you say? Madeleine was a high school friend and after graduation we hung together, traveling, and sharing girl talk. We decided to fly to Portland, Oregon for a vacation, visit with my brother and his family, and tour the Pacific Northwest.

The best time to go is in early June when the rain finally stops and the Portland Rose Festival, rivaling Pasadena's New Year's Day Rose Parade takes place. Floats are decorated with thousands and thousands of roses, and petals of every imaginable color. Each float is prettier than the last one and rose fragrance fills the air. Watchers line up along the parade route and so did we, finding a place not far from the Willamette River where navy ships are docked.

As part of the Festival attraction, it is possible to tour the ships while in port and see how the navy lives. We stepped aboard the first ship and wandered around; going up and down the ladders, through narrow passageways, and in and out of various rooms. Madeleine spent considerable time talking to a particular sailor that caught her fancy on one of the ships we toured. After we got off that ship, she told me she had a date with the sailor and would meet him later for dinner and a show. Her deep, dark brown eyes sparkled full of life as they always did, but this time it was from excitement and anticipation of a soon-to-be budding romance.

After returning home to Illinois and within an extremely short period of time, she snuck off to California to secretly marry her sailor. Things didn't work out so well from the start and perhaps it was not the wisest choice to marry him.

I went to visit her several months later and the beautiful sparkling eyes no longer shined, but instead were dull and expressionless. She was unhappy with navy life and with her already unfaithful husband. Unfortunately she was now pregnant, not working, and needed the navy benefits. She was stuck; too proud to ask her family for help. We

cried together and talked about how everything would be better. As I looked into her deadened, teary eyes, I saw the truth of her future reflecting back along with the now smeared attempted cover up of facial skin discoloration.

###

Writing Techniques: Creating a Good Title **By N. Stewart**

The title appears at the beginning of the piece with the first and last word is always capitalized. The other capitalized words in the title are meaningful or descriptive of the writing and are at the discretion of the author. Words in a title that are not capitalized are: and, a, the, for, with, from, by, of, and but (unless appearing as the first or last word of the title).

The title captures the meaning or the content of the writing – its overall theme, its tone or slant, an image or picture or is pertinent to the character of the story. The title originates from the idea or content of the story, it may use the first or last sentence of the writing, perhaps is similar in appearance or sounding to an existing piece, or it's taken from a quotation.

The title may be a label type if it tells the story of its contents, a statement type if it is an observation about the subject of the writing, a question type if it asks the question what, where, when or why or an imperative type if it instructs the reader to do something.

The words that are selected for the title should be pertinent, tantalizing, catchy, easy to remember, intriguing, interesting, provocative, amusing, and/ or compelling.

The length of title can be one word, two, three, four or five, but usually not more than a 6 word maximum. However, the writer has the option to make the title as long as it takes to say what in indented. The title should also carry a hint of a rhythm, and may use alliteration.

Book titles are underlined. Magazine titles are italicized. Titles of articles use quotation marks. The exception to the rules follow: Sacred writings; laws, acts and other political documents; instrumental musical compositions; series; societies; buildings, and monuments; conferences, seminars, workshops and courses do not use underlining, italics, or quotation marks.