

The truth is...we gather on the Third Monday of each month to practice our writing skills. We listen and share in each other's work. We are small in number and our commitment is strictly to produce and foster creativity among our members.

We started in July 1999 and consist of adults that enjoy writing memoirs, commentaries, essays, poems, and/or prose. Our simple method each month is to use a pre-selected word or phrase as the basis of a story, an idea, an opinion, a derivative of, or an implied essence of and write a 1 to 1 ½ page document. We share our stories, comment, and in that way build up our writing skills through practice and presentation. The atmosphere is friendly and supportive, and the feedback is gentle.

Curious? Always wanted to try writing for fun, entertainment, or even profit? Come visit with us at any of our open meetings. Bring a sample of your work. Sit in and see what we do. If you like it, join us every month and become a member.

**Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group
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February 2019 selection – Mesmerize

**The Mesmerizer
By Sara Schupack**

Ladies and gentlemen, step right up to the Mesmerizer. It is not so much a gadget as a state of mind. Readily available on any device, with just a simple click and the right attitude, you can be free from the troublesome tangle of critical thinking. Choose a party and follow the prompts.

You can show all of the passion, self-righteousness, and patriotism of the most active and engaged citizen, without wasting time reading or thinking upon complex matters. Get back to living and borrow the pre-formed phrases and stances that are sure to captivate any audience. "Family first," "Get the government out of my business," "civil rights for all" or "make the wealthy pay their fair share" are some tantalizing examples. There are easy views on how to show loyalty to our planet as well, whether that be letting well enough alone or saving cute critters from extinction.

One more click and you can find famous people to follow for additional phrases and stances. You can also simply declare "I'm with Bernie" or "I'm with Rush"; no need to elaborate. You can get tips on where to seek your entertainment and recreation from these leaders as well. If you wish to purchase tee shirts, bumper stickers, yard signs or other paraphernalia, those offers will pop up automatically. You needn't search any further. Be the envy of the neighborhood with

appealing signage advertising your stance, especially if you've found a neighborhood with likeminded folks. More and more are conveniently arranged just this way.

Not only does the Mesmerizer give you instant opinions, but it also brings along a clan of buddies who are the same. No need to tax yourself with challenging conversations requiring active listening and compromise. What a headache! Now you can relax with people just like you. Don't try too hard to find differences. Just go along with easy relations. If you do enjoy a good fight, it's easy enough to engage those in the other camp. Arguments against them are there for your easy reference. Get your heart pumping at a protest or counter-protest. These are not for everyone, but some find them quite fulfilling. All of the slogans and strategies are prepared for you.

Feel connected and important with the Mesmerizer. You might just find that you no longer need the expense of a regular newspaper subscription or the inconvenience of getting out to vote. Get back to that hobby or project you've been putting off. There's more to life than politics!

###

Be Mesmerized
By Val Collins

Be mesmerized by the captivating, whatever that might be,
Be carried away from the day to day, from worldly woes be free.
The habitual grind will crush the mind; the news will steal the soul,
Routines become monotonous; the future will seem dole.
Find a pleasant focus through a hobby that delights;
Pursue neglected interests, be raised to grander heights.
Let nature mesmerize the mind with beauty so serene;
The ebb and flow of seasons gifting all with each new scene.
Get lost in something wonderful, allow yourself escape,
Into a world that fascinates where one can stand agape.
It's wise to take time out and then take time out once again;
Do this repeatedly and see the benefits times ten.
Be willing to be mesmerized as often as can be;
Life will be, enriched indeed, and that's a guarantee!

###

Mesmerizing Sound
By Edward Schoeffler

I couldn't contrive a tale such as this. Not in my wildest Imagination. And yet there are these moments when we are confronted with an unfamiliar and strange world. That Saturday afternoon of 1980 when the room went dark. And the sweetest of All celestial voices permeated the air.

Music distinctive from oscillations of earthly sounds. As the choirs from Handel's Messiah recorded in Super Stereo is crudely primitive in comparison to the voices I heard.

It was an Angelic recitation. A vocal choir of the multitudes in harmonic total perfection, coming from a single source.

For believing in FAITH has always come easy for me, prompting a prayer of brokenness in veneration. By holding every thought captive. Prone more to listen than to speak.

Some theologians may believe that in an AFTER*LIFE our senses are sedated. But my brief encounter was the contrary. Characterized with the quality of ecstatic delight, captivating my soul with a power of over-whelming intensity. That I never, ever want to experience this revelation again. Not In this present life time.

(Aside to audience) Should I stop here...

*or
go on?*

You may laugh in disbelief,
But here comes the strangest most bizarre part of this mystical encounter -

The musical tones penetrated every,
Every single molecular compound of my Being.

Then I saw an image,
Resembling a microscopic fabric of the soul.

(Aside to audience) Should I stop here...

*or
go on?*

The vocal chants became the creation of an actual substance,
Just like the solidness of the walls,
the floor,
this table.

The vision lasted less than one-minute earth time.

I am a strong believer in preordained PURPOSE.
But have no idea...

No idea

Whatsoever why I was given this revelation?

###

Magnifico the Magnificent **By Carol Karvon**

"Welcome, Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to my show. My name is Magnifico. I am the greatest hypnotist who ever lived. I learned my craft from the best hypnotists in the world and perfected my skills in Europe. I performed before the crowned heads of Europe. I will show you wonderous and amazing things taught to me by the world's greatest showmen".

So began the performance of Magnifico who claimed he could mesmerize anyone. My sister, Kitty, had convinced me to come with her to this program. She had always been interested in magic and was herself a budding magician since we were kids. Hypnosis had recently become another interest for Kitty. Personally, I thought it was all a sham, but for Kitty's sake, I'd keep my thoughts to myself.

"May I have a volunteer from the audience. How about you, young lady". To my horror he was looking straight at us.

"No way, not me, you go", I said to Kitty, "this was all your idea". Kitty started to get up, but Magnifico had a different idea.

"No, not her, you" he said, pointing to me, "I want you, the skeptic. That way when you fall under my spell, everyone will believe I am what I say, the greatest mesmerist who ever lived. Yes, I saw the look on your face. You are not a believer. I'll see if I can change that".

What a pompous boor, I thought.

That's how I very reluctantly found myself being led up onto the stage. If the floor could've only opened up and swallowed me, I'd have been very happy at that moment. It was so dark, looking out towards the audience, I couldn't see them, but I knew they were there. It was comforting not to be able to see their faces.

Magnifico was holding some large shiny object on a string in front of my eyes and moving it back and forth. I think he was muttering something, but I couldn't make it out — some kind of mumbo jumbo — or maybe another language.

"Oh, give me a break", I thought. "Does this really work?" I'd seen movies where people were put under some kind of spell. I'd been hypnotized in the past and it never involved anything like this. Usually it was the sound of the hypnotizer's voice that soothed and relaxed me. I think it also involved some counting. I heard that you couldn't be made to do something under hypnosis that was not in your nature. I hope that was true.

"Sally, Sally come on. The show's over we have to leave". Kitty was tugging at my sleeve. What the heck was she doing. I tried to shake her off.

"What, how is that possible. I just went onto the stage a few minutes ago."

"Sally, that was an hour ago. Magnifico thought you were such an excellent subject to demonstrate his skill at hypnosis, he kept you up there for a long time. Don't you remember anything? Do you remember sitting down on the edge of the stage and singing? It was supposed to be Jingle Bells, but sure didn't sound like it. The audience was howling with laughter. Didn't you hear them? Wait until I tell mom you were hypnotized and don't remember a thing about what happened after you went on the stage. Maybe I can borrow his magic pendant and get you to do whatever I tell you too. Hmm — I wonder if Magnifico would loan it to me and teach me to use it. What do you think, should I ask him?"

"Don't you dare, Kitty, and if you know what's good for you, you'll forget this whole ugly episode and never, ever, repeat a word of what happened to anyone. I don't ever want to hear the name Magnifico again or see another hypnotist as long as I live."

###

Her Face (Part 2)

By N. Stewart

It was a couple of days after the cafeteria incident and he spotted her in the hospital chapel. Today, he was at the hospital to take his brother home. He opened the chapel door and quietly slipped in. He saw her profile again. It *was* her...from the cafeteria where he had watched her drink tea. He had kept the sketch he had made of her. He stood mesmerized at the back of the chapel. Quietly, he entered the pew directly across from her. Here he was again, watching her, invading her privacy and feeling terrible. Yet he was drawn to her for some reason and could not stop staring at her face.

After several solemn minutes, she got up from the pew and turned to leave. He got up, too. He smiled at her and gestured for her to go in front of him, reaching for the door handle and opening it to allow her to pass. Once in the corridor his spoken words were muttered and she hesitated, stopping to listen. "I'm taking my brother home after his hip replacement," he clearly said this time. Remembering her quivering lip from the earlier encounter he then continued, "I saw you in the cafeteria a few days ago, and you looked quite upset. I trust things are better now."

"They will be. Once everything is taken care of here. It will settle down. My ex-husband passed away this morning. That's why I was in the chapel just now, praying for him. The hospital had called me as next of kin after his heart attack on Monday. We've been divorced for many years, but looked out for each other as friends would. We both have limited family."

"I'm sorry. I don't mean to intrude on your privacy, but you look like you could use someone to talk to right now. I'd like to help. Would you join me in a cup of tea or coffee in the cafeteria and we can talk or I could sit and listen? I know you don't know me, but I'm really not a bad guy. For some reason, I've been pulled toward you each time I see you."

"Okay, a cup of tea would be lovely. Thank you," she said as they walked toward the elevator.

After sitting at the table awhile, talking about inconsequential things she began talking about her ex. "I looked deeply into his silvery blue eyes that night and saw the lie. He had simply stated he no longer loved me and wanted to be released from our marriage. I was dumbfounded. I felt there was something else going on, but he never shared the true reason. Up until then, we had a great relationship. It was a bonding from the start over our witty, dry sense of humor. I got him and he got me. We were friends first and always. We shared our lives. Our marriage was solid or so I thought. I remember the exact moment he told me it was ended. He dropped his eyes to his shoes, unable to look into mine and asked that I please not make this more difficult than it was. It was over. I knew what he was saying wasn't true. He loved me. What could I do? It was over for him and couldn't be fixed. I tried although one person alone cannot fix a marriage.

"That was a few years ago. He never remarried and neither did I. When the hospital called, I went to his side. We spoke of things past and what a good life we had had together, but he never told me the truth about what had changed for him so suddenly and so radically. The doctors told us he only had a few days to live. So, I stayed at his side. I did not want him to die alone. Very early this morning I was called and I was with him when he died. He never told me

why he ended us. I had always hoped he would. But even on his death bed he didn't tell me the reason." Tears began falling from her eyes.

He handed her his white handkerchief, "There isn't much more I can say than I'm sorry. The loss of a loved one is very difficult to deal with for all of us. I hope I didn't upset you more?"

"No, you didn't. I needed to get it out. Thank you for being a kind, gentle stranger and for listening to me. If I may be so bold...would you allow me to repay your kindness by perhaps joining me for dinner some night? We just met and if you don't mind, I would be more comfortable meeting you at the restaurant. My treat, of course. Would you considerate it?"

His cell pinged at that moment. "Yes, I would like that. I'm Ron. Here's my cell number and in a few days, if you still want to, call me and we'll make arrangements for dinner. I will meet you there.

She nodded yes. "I'm Grace. Now, please go and take care of your family."

Leaving her sitting in the cafeteria, he headed off to take his brother home from the hospital.

###

Her Face (Part 3)

By N. Stewart

The days rolled by into a week, then two with nothing from Grace. He had waited patiently, but now he was becoming anxious that she would never call. He didn't know her last name and it'd be impossible to find her. Why did she fascinate him so, he often wondered.

When Shelia died, he felt such a profound loss that he believed nothing would ever again touch his broken heart. Nor would he let it, but that resolve was slipping. His sons were raised, were on their own, and didn't need him to look after them anymore. Before, there wasn't time to do anything, running to their events and taking care of the house, trying to ease their sorrow seemed enough. Now, he felt...what was it...lonely, left out, not needed. Hadn't he earned the right to have someone in his life to love again. Grace was a stranger to him, but it seemed right to get to know her and, perhaps, in time she would become important to him. Shelia would always be a part of his life and remain in his heart forever. But she wasn't here with him, and he found the possibility of joy, happiness, reflecting itself in Grace's face, was what he now wanted. He pulled out the napkin with her drawn picture and slid his finger over the image. His heart fluttered a bit as it always did when he looked at her face.

His cell rang later and an unknown number appeared. It was her. He knew. It *had* to be. He answered. "Is this Ron?" She asked. "It's Grace from the cafeteria in the hospital. You were so kind and offered to share your time with me. Remember?"

His heart beat faster. "Yes, it's me and, of course, I remember. I was hoping you'd call."

"Sorry I told so long to call but the arrangements for the memorial and the legal hoops in selling his condo took much longer than I expected. He left it all up to me and never told me his wishes. It was an emotional struggle, but I have managed to survive."

They spoke about their individual lives and how each came to be in this moment. Ron slowly revealed the unanticipated death of his wife, being alone to raise two boys, and the pain and loneliness that he carried. "I saw that same pain in your eyes and in the quiver of your lips in the cafeteria that first day," he said. "I wanted to be there...to help ease what you were going through...and maybe help myself a little at the same time, too."

Sharing of their lives on the long phone conversation had been good, and they didn't want to end the connection. As she had promised, Grace suggested going to dinner soon. They quickly arranged to meet at Armano's Bistro on 5th and Jordan the following Tuesday night around 7. With that they hung up and he took a deep breath. He hadn't realized he had been holding it in for so very long.

He arrived early at Armano's and selected a table near the window where they could be private. He was jittery and grumbled at the waiter to bring a glass of wine. "No, no never mind," he said. And, then immediately said, "No, wait," as he saw her enter the restaurant. He got up as she approached, extending his hand, asking if she would care for a drink. She nodded. He ordered two glasses of Sauvignon Blanc. She nodded approval. She started to sit in the chair opposite him and he motioned to sit next to him. The wine came, the dinner came, the coffee came, the bill came and the conversation stayed easy and genuine throughout the evening. Their night was over and he felt his spirit sink. "Time to go," he said. And, they prepared to leave. He sensed an unvoiced sigh, perhaps a reluctance to end their evening, coming from her as he helped her on with her coat.

Outside of the restaurant, he asked to walk her to her car. He took her hand, but she led the way. He opened the driver's side door and she got in. He bent down and with a light touch of his finger traced the profile of her face. He then kissed her softly on her cheek. "Well, shall we see how this all works out?" He then said, "I would like to see you again."

"Let's see what comes of this," she said. I strongly believe in the wiliness of fate, bringing people together. I had a great time tonight and always enjoy your company. If you follow me, we can have a night cap at my place."

"If you're sure...." She nodded yes. "I'm in! Lead on." Ron shouted, quickly moving toward his car. His spirit rose and with that a smile reappeared on his face.

###

Another possible ending to Her Face (Part 3):

Beyond Her Face By Carol Karvon

Over the next week, when he wasn't helping his brother, Ron often thought of Grace. When she called him in a few days as he suggested, he couldn't know that Grace was thinking of him too. Grace had never done anything so rash as invite a total stranger to dinner, and then offer to pay for it. She didn't know what possessed her to be so bold. All she knew was that Ron seemed like an old friend, even though they'd just met. He was easy to talk to and seemed to sense her need for comfort, having just left her former husband's deathbed. She didn't feel pressure to explain her thoughts to him. He respected her personal space, yet was warm and genuinely concerned.

A twist of fate threw them together in the hospital's cafeteria. Had either of them arrived a little earlier, a little later, their meeting probably wouldn't have happened. And, if Ron hadn't approached Grace, they wouldn't have spoken.

Ron and Grace agreed to meet at Dino's the next night, a small charming Italian restaurant near the hospital. They were both familiar with Dino's cuisine so it seemed a good choice. The restaurant had an old-world ambience.

Ron arrived first and ordered a small carafe of the house Chianti. He hoped Grace hadn't changed her mind about dinner. He was looking forward to getting better acquainted with her. Grace was running a little late; traffic was very congested. It was a Friday evening after all and everyone was anxious get somewhere at the same time. She hoped Ron hadn't given up on her and left Dino's.

When Grace finally arrived, they ordered dinner and were surprised to learn they both chose the same thing.

A couple of hours passed by seamlessly while they talked. Time stood still. Only the lone waiter hovering nearby was a reminder that it might be getting near closing time. The waiter was wondering if they'd ever leave so he could go home. Trying to hurry things along, he brought out the broom and started sweeping the floor. They didn't pay him any attention. Then he started upending chairs and placing them atop the tables. Now, he had their attention at last.

Ron and Grace realized it might be time to leave, but neither wanted the evening to end. Ron asked if Grace wanted to go somewhere else to continue the evening, but she said it was getting late and needed to get home. It had been a long day.

When he walked her to her car, he asked if they could see each other again and wondered if she'd like to see a movie sometime. Or, if she were interested in Art, he knew of a small gallery that featured talented, but yet unknown local artists. They were having a reception and showing the next day, if she would like to go with him. If she didn't think that was too soon to see him again. Grace said that sounded like fun and agreed to see him the next day.

Ron had to check on his brother in the morning, but was free the rest of the day. He suggested they have a late lunch and then visit the gallery.

"What do you think, maybe around 2 0'clock for lunch?" asked Ron.

"Ron, that sounds like a perfect Saturday afternoon, it's a date", replied Grace.

They exchanged addresses and Ron said he'd pick her up the next day.

Grace hummed a tune all the way home. She hadn't felt this happy and light hearted in a long time. She looked forward to the next day, whatever it might bring.

Meanwhile, Ron was so pleased that he had approached Grace in the hospital's cafeteria. He felt like he was beginning a new phase in his life.

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