

an exhibit of Behrend students' expressive thoughts

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the conclusion of

The Desert Magician

continued from the Oct. 16 Showcase

I cooked two steaks, one for me and one for the lady. The kids weren't around anymore. I already mentioned my daughter, Heather, who's in and out of court looking for child support from that bastard, but she don't talk to me anymore. The information is brought to me from my wife. My son, George, lives in Fairbank, Minnesota, on a horse farm. He breed 'em. I could go on about my youngins, 'cause I have five of them altogether. In my sixty years of livin' I kept pretty busy with Janet.

The steaks were mild, thin, juicy planks that turned out magnificent in the heat of my charcoal grill, and nothing set it off better than a sample of that good ol' potato salad. It was a family recipe. The chill desert night was perfect. The two of us sat outside and gazed across our property. It was good to stop thinking about the magician and the stories surrounding that stone. Soon, however, there was a knock at the door. On the other side was the magician. My gun wasn't on me, so he had me at knife-point with nothing for me to do.

"Gah," I exclaimed, completely unprepared. Your guard doesn't generally have to be so high when you're a sheriff in these parts. "What do ya want with Larkin?"

There was no answer. I stared straight into the blackness of his hooded face. Then, I noticed he had the stone clasped tight to his side, between what I supposed was his elbow and his ribs. There was no real knowing if he had those amenities because of the dark cloak the covered his whole body. Only his hands were visible, and they were - completely inhuman! They were a pale green, gnarled at the knuckles, and scaly, not as in frog's skin but a drier scaly. The hands had red streaks in them, seemingly veins that were entirely too close to the surface of the skin. Janet entered the foyer from the back door and dropped our dinner plates in horror at the intruder.

"What do you want with us?" I asked again, slowly stepping back toward the kitchen from the foyer. The magician kept the knife to my neck the entire way. I had a shotgun over the stove, but it would take awhile for me to walk him close enough to where I could grab it. As I moved further and further away from the door, he began to make a gurgling sound that one might relate to a calmer version of a garbage disposal, but I didn't stop moving toward the kitchen. My wife screamed and ran upstairs to the only phone in the house. I figured she would do that, because I leave it to her to think of the most textbook thing to do in a dangerous situation.

Suddenly the magician let the stone drop from being clenched on his right side to being in the palm of his hand. It, then, slammed the stone onto my kitchen counter. It glowed quickly for a moment and then faded. I was too enthralled with everything that was going on. The mystery of it never happened around here in Larkin. I was halfway between the entrance to the kitchen and the stove. The magician lowered the knife from my throat and then stabbed it brutally into my left shoulder. I screamed in pain and fell to the floor, but my brain seemed to focus more on the magician than on the pain. The knife, left bluntly in my arm, the magician raised both hands to lower his hood. The gurgling came and went as if it were its breathing process. When the hood was dropped, the sun came through the kitchen window to meet the face of the alien. It was that same pale green, but there were no eyes. A bulbous neck led to a bony, rather skeletal head, which only had two nostrils and a mouth. Those same red veins continued throughout the flesh.

"What the hell are you?" I asked, finally pulling the knife from my shoulder and pulling myself toward the hidden shotgun. Its drooling mouth opened suddenly to reply, "From beyond the stars." As I pulled myself up from the floor, not taking my eyes off of the magician, the stone began to glow and seemingly start to radiate heat. I pulled the shotgun down from above the stove, simultaneously with a slew of other events.

My wife descended the staircase to report the cops were here, assuming that if officers were coming, an alien would become afraid of our inferior race. The stone became brighter and hotter.

I heard the sirens of police cars pulling in front of my house, the desert sand stirred up to the sky. Jim Hicks and Harry Burrows stepped out of their deputy cars, with several other officers from adjoining towns and raised their guns to my house. A rescuing attempt through megaphone began. Yet, the stone became brighter and hotter still.

I focused on it. The vibrant blue light seemed to eat away at all material, first the counter and cupboards, then the refrigerator, followed by that closest side of the kitchen wall. It was destroying all matter and getting more and more powerful. This was the end. The magician was next. Each strand of its cloak was devoured first, and then particles of its skin and blood were absorbed until there was no alien left standing before me. The shotgun I had finally retrieved had now become useless. I stared in awe. The heat began to melt my hands, yet there was no pain. My arms and legs were then enveloped in the radiating pulses, the fibers of my clothes and internal organs turned into nothingness within the stone.

I would not be recreated once inside the stone, and it would devour all of Earth.

There was nothing left of me, and it was the end of peace in Larkin.



Support for a Tattered Soul

He thought that by leaving them with me, maybe I'd eventually understand where he came from. Maybe I'd understand where he wanted to go. He didn't know the only person's shoes I was gonna put myself in were my own.
Molly Nosko, junior communications major

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- earn valuable experience by putting yourself out there!
- begin a portfolio with real publication references and work your way up!

Submit entries, questions, comments or concerns to showcase@psu.edu. All text documents must be proofread to the author's discretion. Photos will be printed in black and white, but will display online in color as necessary.

Gnarls

In the snow, the black bird perches,
singing on the gnarled branch of a tree.
And in the rain the spider's web glimmers
on the twisting twigs trembling against the wind.
The black squirrel scuttles up, up
up the sloped lawn, chattering,
chittering and chirping. Green grass
sways in the cool breeze.
The lady bug, moving against the sand,
scuttles slowly up my arm.
Tickling the tight tensed flesh
as gooseflesh breaks out.

The path cut into the slope,
where a black squirrel scuttles,
and a black bird perches patiently.
Spiders and lady bugs watch too.
I walk thinking of Gnarls,
a being we all know.
The ghost of the forest
who watches us.
The path, winding and matted,
trampled down by boots and shoes.
The tree, swooping and drooping,
moans its winter song as I walk by.
Through the thick thatches above,
the butterfly parades,
its wings like stained glass
illuminated by the sun.
In a lonely patch,
where none ever would look,
a swing hangs lazily
by four spindly ropes.
It gets dark, it always does,
and I leave the swing to arc
in its eternal pendulum motion,
to go back home through the woods.
I walk thinking of Gnarls,
a being we all know.
The ghost of the forest
who watches me.

John Dennis Hadlock
sophomore English literature major



Woodlawn
The dying branches of this tree aren't enough to shade the graves stands beside.
It makes us wonder who has left the area so alone, who stopped caring.
Molly Nosko, junior communications major