

2013 MCC Creative Writing Contest

Fiction Category

First Place: “*The Island Hogs*,” by Hannah Kole

He opened his eyes and took a deep breath of salty air. Panicked, he jumped to gather his surroundings but fell off the almost deflated raft he had been sleeping on for about an hour. After taking a minute to think about what was going on, he remembered where he was; on a beach in Mexico, waiting for his new wife to come out and join him in the water. Now the only land he saw was a small island about 1000 feet away. It was getting dark, so he swam quickly to the tiny place that could save him.

He crawled onto the sandy beach and spotted a small by modern condo dropped right in the middle of the island. Next to the condo he noticed a pig pen that was almost half the size of the condo it sat beside, with gigantic hogs squealing around in it. As he got closer he gagged at the rancid hog smell and noticed that they had been fed not too long ago. He got excited and knew someone must be around this almost deserted island somewhere. He stepped up onto the cemented stoop, which must have had red paint spilled on it at some point in time. Knocking on the door, he prayed under his breath that someone was inside. After about a minute of knocking, he decided that no one was home and he turned to go look for a boat of some sort to take him home. If he couldn't find a boat, then he'd need something to help him out for the night.

Just before he turned to walk down the steps, the door suddenly opened, and a beautiful woman stepped out with a tight smile on her face. She had long, black hair that reminded him of the ocean waves that had taken him to this strange place. Her skin was perfectly colored by the summer sun, and her dark eyes were piercing, like she could know anything about him that she wanted to just by glancing at him. His eyes darted straight to her lips. Red, a red that seemed to have been stained on.

“Hello! My name is John Lennox, I seemed to have fallen asleep while floating and I ended up here.” John said instinctively, “Do you have a boat to get me back to my hotel?” The native woman just looked at him, seeming to comprehend all of what he was saying, and beckoned him with her finger to follow him inside. Once in the relatively large condo, bigger on the inside than what it looked on the outside. John said, “I'm really sorry to bother you; I just need to get back.” The woman went to a side table next to the couch and grabbed a pen and notebook out of it and started to scribble. She then handed the notebook to John, while staring deeply into his eyes the entire time. Her scribbles read

I'm sorry; I cannot talk because I recently had some damage done to my mouth. I do have a boat but it is too late to go out tonight. You are welcome to stay here until morning when I can take you back. I have liver in the oven if you want.

“Thank you very much” John said after reading her note, “Anything sounds great right about now, even liver.”

The woman held up her finger to motion John to stay put in the living room and walked into what must have been the kitchen. This condo was decorated with artifacts that seemed to have come from everywhere in the entire world. On the wall, there were animal heads hanging all over, leaving almost no empty wall space. John couldn't even tell the color of the walls, although

it looked patchy of a red and pink color. John thought it was strange to have the walls completely covered in wall décor but the walls were soon forgotten when he saw a huge wardrobe that reached all the way to the ceiling. Oddly, it was cracked open and it was easy to notice all the perfect crafting that went into designing the closet. Swirls and fancy carvings covered almost the entire outside and inside of the wardrobe. It was filled with all sorts of extravagant clothing and costumes. Her husband must be a traveler, John thought. He walked quietly to the clothes. He ran his fingers across the designs in this magnificent wood work. His fingers worked slowly, feeling all of the different fabrics of the clothing. There must have been items from Africa, Asia, all over the world, but there were normal clothes too, only men clothing and many pairs of swimming trunks.

John was so amazed by all the clothing that he didn't hear the woman walk back into the room. She tapped on his shoulder with two fingers, and he jumped. "Sorry, you scared me." John whispered, leaning in close to her full lips. "These clothes are terrific, is your husband a traveler?" She pulled on his shirt like a leash on a puppy dog into the kitchen. She sat him down at the table and placed a plate filled with liver, rice and a dinner roll, in front of him. She started writing on her note pad again and passed it to him. John felt bubbly inside like he was receiving a middle school love note.

I forgot to tell you, my name is Mariana. I do not have a husband; those clothes have been acquired by myself over the years. I hope you like your dinner. I'm glad to not eat alone tonight. I am tired of eating alone.

John nodded and finished his dinner quickly; he soon felt very tired. He asked Mariana for a bed and she lead him up the stairs to a big dark room. As soon as he walked into the room his nose was bombarded with the smell of iodine and iron. Not thinking anything of it, he thanked Mariana and hopped into the fluffy bed. Within seconds he was asleep.

John was awakened what only felt like an hour later, by a loud breathing sound next to his bed. When he looked around the black room he noticed Mariana standing to the left of his bed smiling at him, lips closed. "Is it morning already? John asked with an almost breathless whisper that was filled with panic and fear. Mariana shook her head, from what John could make out in the very dim light, Mariana then dropped her silk robe to exploit her very natural and excited body. She crawled slowly on top of John, and roughly placed her hands around his neck so tightly he couldn't make a word slip out of his mouth. He could feel her finger nails, long, sharp, and hard. He stared at her, frozen in shock, not knowing what to do. Her face became invisible in the dark. John then felt her hot breath on his cheek and then an extremely hot kiss on his forehead. She loosened her grip on his throat, "I have a wife, I don't think she'd like this, Mariana."

"I can be your new wife, John." Mariana whispered into his ear. She then began to explore every part of John's muscular body, sending goose bumps down his spine and tingles through every follicle of his hair. "Wouldn't it be great, John?" Mariana laughed in a cute giggly voice and John almost wanted to accept her actions towards him, "Just you, me, and the children."

"Get off of me, you're crazy!" John's words ran out of his mouth.

"You don't like me?" Mariana asked innocently. "I think I could make a wonderful Mrs. Lennox."

"What is wrong with you?" John noticed he was screaming.

"I will not fight for your love, but it is too bad because you were the cutest out of all of them."

Just as John was going to use all of his might to push Mariana off, she reached above his head on the backboard of the bed and grabbed a homemade spear that had been on the wall for decoration, and placed it in the middle of his neck. “You have had your chance, John, but now you serve only one purpose.” She pressed a little harder onto her weapon, and John slowly stopped gasping for air.

The next morning, Mariana woke up feeling exhausted. She hung up a new pair of swimming trunks in her wardrobe and smiled at the new addition to her collection. She started a new load of laundry and added the entire jug of bleach to the bedding that her house guest had dirtied the night before. She then cooked herself a delicious breakfast made from the freshest meat she had.

After she had a good two plates full, she began to drag a large white cooler across the floor to the door. When she got out of the door onto the cemented steps, the cooler accidentally tipped sideways and all the contents fell out, drenching the steps in a bright red color. “Not again...” Mariana cursed under her breath as she scooped the squishy flesh back inside the cooler. She carried the cooler the rest of the way to the fenced in area which held her livestock. “Breakfast time children!” she yelled at as she let herself into the hog pen, almost getting tackled over by the animals and made her way over to the trough. She dumped the meat into their feeding bowls and patted each pig on the head while they ate. She then made her way back inside her condo to sharpen her spear.

JUDGE’S COMMENTS

The Island Hogs is a horror story about a man who accidentally floats away and washes up on an island, where a seemingly mute temptress “helps” him. When he spurns her advances, he meets an unusual but chilling demise. This story begins right in the action, with the man realizing he is far from the beach. Woven into this story is the man’s temptation to cheat on his wife, (“John felt bubbly inside, like he was receiving a middle school love note”) which lends a human element to this fantasy tale. The shift in point-of-view at the end gives the reader a fuller understanding of the foreshadowing earlier in the story.

Elissa Cahn was the contest judge. She is an MFA Fiction student at Western Michigan University, where she teaches composition and serves as the nonfiction editor for Third Coast. Her work has appeared in: NANO Fiction, Midwestern Gothic, Harpur Palate, and Quarterly West. She is currently at work on a story collection.