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Come in...and be captivated...

Writers' Contest!

In our recent summer Two Year Anniversary Issue, we offered three different contest prompts for submitting writers to choose from. Participating writers all chose Contest 1 and we determined our winners from that stock of entries. Two submissions got our attention in terms of originality and we had some difficulty narrowing down one winner as both submissions appealed to us in different ways; thus, we'd like to announce a tie for first place to Cheryl Sommese and Virginia O'Dine~ both of their creative entries are below. Each will be receiving the prize of a ten dollar gift card to Barnes and Noble bookstore. Thank you to everyone who joined in the fun!!!

Contest 1- There are three objects a century old in a drawer of the antique writing desk you purchased: a key, a broken locket, and rusty-edged letter opener. In 500 words or less, create a scene that played out in the room which first held the desk a century ago and explain the items' relationship to one another.

Behind Locked Doors

By Cheryl Sommese

Year 2010

Worry overcame Janice's thin face. Her once-bright eyes transformed to grief, and her cheerful manner morphed to despair. "How awful," she uttered as she began reading the letters.

Year 1910

"Don't lock me in here," the terrified woman screamed. "I told you to stay in the room!" the angry man replied. The door jingled violently as it slammed with force.

"Maybe if I loved Jonathon more, maybe he wouldn't do this to me?" Josephine sobbed. But she loved him with all her heart, as much as any wife could, but love didn't seem to matter. "If only I could find the key," she thought in angst.

Sleep eventually delivered the pretty woman from sorrow. When she awoke, a prism of radiance shone through the grand window above her bed. The light formed a luminous path leading to a mahogany desk.

In desperation, she ran to the well-made writing table and began rummaging through the sturdy drawers. Her delicate fingers searched and searched, yet the only items they could locate were a tablet of scallop-edged paper, monogrammed envelopes, and a shimmering letter opener. A fountain pen and ink blotter sit visibly on top of the wood.

The frightened form considered abandoning the "key" mission until she came upon a concealed space. "Maybe it's in there?" she thought.

Optimism filled her heart as she grabbed the shiny letter opener and began prying off the barrier. The pointy object suffered several major blows as it forced open the cover. Inside the covert space lay a single skeleton key.

“I found it!” she shrieked.

Josephine placed the object on her outstretched hand; a sweet-ish smell accompanied its presence.

Without further delay, she ran to the door and frantically inserted the skinny metal in the hole, but it was not a proper fit. Hopelessness soon overshadowed her eyes as she tore off the platinum locket from her neck; it contained a stunning wedding image of her and Jonathon.

With a heavy heart, the woman began writing. One letter after another piled on the desk’s surface. When she was done, she hid the skeleton key, broken locket, and beat-up letter opener in a back drawer. The multiple letters were stuffed in a concealed panel below the surface so Jonathon would not find them.

“When will my food come?” her full lips murmured. She cried out, hoping one of the servants would hear her, but no one came.

Year 2010

Janice tossed down the remarkably-preserved writings. When she began exploring the innards of the antique desk she had just purchased, she had no idea what she would find; but she certainly had not expected this.

“Ghosts live here?” she whispered.

Shadows cast upon the wall as she clutched the key, rusty letter opener, and broken locket in her unsteady hand. With pious conviction, she knelt beside the mahogany object and began the afternoon in prayer.

Contest 1

By Virginia O'Dine

The woman slammed her hand down, startling me so that I scattered blobs of ink over my ledger. Pressing blotting paper over my carefully printed numbers, I cast a dirty look towards the woman, ready to compare her backside to that of the old farting mule tethered outside. Then I saw her shoulders shaking in silent

misery and I clamped my mouth shut.

I stepped out from behind the counter and approached the writing desk where she sat, her white-fingered gloves covering her face. I reached out to touch her shoulder and she flew past me, out the door, her crumpled letters fluttering to the floor.

"Be what it would," I said, and bent to gather the papers, resisting reading the private words. On the desktop I spotted the object of her wrath: a locket, its tiny hinge broken and the two halves laying open.

Footsteps clomped behind me and a drunken prospector entered, smelling like a sweaty horse. I swept the locket pieces and the papers into the tiny front drawer. No one else's business.

"What in the hell is wrong with her?" The man slurred. "Bahh, I'll buy her somethin pretty and she'll be happy as new. Look here, I've found a nugget!" He waved his fist in the air, his fingers clenched around the precious lump of color. "I can finally send for my family!"

"That your girl too?" I tipped my head towards the door. "How you going to keep that juggling act in the air when the missus shows up?"

"I'm just a jugglin fool," he said with a lopsided grin. "Now, git me my mail." He rummaged around in his dirty vest pocket. "I've got to git to th' bank. Sees my box key here. Now I got plenty gold!"

"Yesser." I went to the shelf of cubbyholes, mail stuffed throughout haphazardly, somewhat alphabetically. "I saw something come in a couple days ago"-

Uh oh...

The door banged open again. The woman stood there, mad as hell.

"You bastard! You're married?! We've been together in this god forsaken town for two years while you keep promising me you'll strike it rich, and all this time yer married?"

The man cowered back against the counter. "Now how did you find that out?" he bellowed.

She pointed a finger at me. "He gave me your mail! It was a letter from your wife!" She stomped over to the desk. "Where is it?!" She picked up the letter opener and turned back at him. He took a staggering step forward, then the woman's white glove started to turn red. She gave me a look that would shrivel pickles, then calmly left, stepping over the man who had crumpled at her feet.

I came around the counter and shook my head at the mess on the floor. I bent and picked up his safety deposit key.

"Now maybe I can get me a horse and get rid of that temperamental flatulent donkey."

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