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Emileigh Chassell

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Emileigh Chassell

Emileigh Chassell was born on July 25, 2000 in Nacogdoches, Texas. She will begin her freshman year of college at SFA in the fall. She normally writes poetry but has developed a love of short stories because of Stephen King. Her poems hit on feminist ideals as well as a retelling of a popular Greek myth. Additionally, her short story is an eye opening tale that will make you wonder how your interaction with someone will affect them in the future.

Dear Straight White Male Politicians,

Why don't you leave my bleeding and pulsating reproductive organs alone?
You have no authority over what I do with my microscopic eggs.
I can fry them or freeze them; I promise it won't ruin your life.
Why should you be able to decide what goes in and out of my vagina?
Whether I'm pushing out a baby or shoving in an I.U.D., it won't affect you.
You don't have to deal with the painful ovarian cysts, so why should you decide whether I can get treatment for my plights?
That's right, you shouldn't. So why don't you go mind your own uterus?

Male Privilege

Is being able to take up two seats and not moving when asked. They stay, legs spread wide, while girls are told to keep theirs shut.

Male privilege is not having to worry, as much as women, about being raped in the middle of the night. Not having to keep their keys between their fingers and eyes moving.

Male privilege is having the excuse that "boys will be boys", instead of having to take responsibility for their actions.

The Moon

Shines down on the scandalous scene.
A man caught watching their virgin queen.
He hid behind the trees to escape her might.
But little did he know, it was his last night.

She leapt out of the pool, water on her skin.
She forbade him speech, but he heard his kin.
He cried out to them in a savage scream.
And alas they heard him from down the stream.

The huntress lashed out and the man transformed.
A stag appeared, white as snow and deformed.
His dogs stared with hunger and greed.
The pack attacked and he began to bleed.

As teeth sunk in, blood stained his pure white coat.
This act made sure he could never gloat.
He had seen the huntress in the night.
By the end he stopped putting up a fight.

Misconception

A knock on the door signals the arrival of the delivery man. Wallace's dog, Chica, barks at the door in a rapid series of yelps, her nails clacking against the wooden floors as she jumps double her normal height. The recliner groans as Wallace's bulging body struggles to rise out of its leather home. As his feet hit the floor they are joined by crumbs and food wrappers trying to escape the folds of his body. The pounding of Wallace's feet echo off the piles of miscellaneous objects filling his home. The walls, an art museum filled with coupons and newspaper clippings. Wallace's greasy fingers make contact with the silver door handle, his grotesque reflection staring back at him as his fingers slip over the lock.

The door creaks open revealing Wallace to the unsuspecting delivery man, he stares in shock, looking over Wallace's body in a fascinated revulsion. His nose turns up as the smell of mildew and rancid body odor drifts out of the small house.

"Umm..." the delivery man stutters, "Did you order the house specialties fried rice, beef, and shrimp chow mein and twelve sugar rolls?" The delivery man reads out the list of food Wallace had order only thirty minutes ago. He looks back up at Wallace, his eyes still wide and watering at the shape and smell of the man standing before him, wondering how one man could eat all of that food. Wallace shifts from foot to foot, his bulging stomach swinging with each sway of his figure.

"Yes, that's my order, how much will it be?" Wallace croaks out, turning to reach for his wallet. The delivery man stares at Wallace's back, looking at the various colorful stains covering his browning shirt. Sweat drips down Wallace's neck, soaking his shirt in the efforts of human communication. Wallace turns back, catching the man staring at his soiled shirt.

"Well... how much?" Wallace says with a little more force, scaring the delivery man out of his disgusted trance.

"Oh, it's \$24.50." He says, eyes growing in fear of Wallace. Wallace reaches into his wallet, pulling out a two ten dollar bills, sixteen quarters and ten nickels. Wallace hands them to the delivery man and grabs his food. The money is sweaty and covered in grease from Wallace's swollen hands and the delivery man looked down in disgust.

"Thanks." Wallace says closing the door as fast as his body can manage. The delivery man stares at the closed door, *how could one man eat all that food alone?* He thinks to himself.

Wallace leans against the door, facing the living room and thinking about the events that had just happened. He thinks about the delivery man's face, how he had looked at him as if he was not human. The disgust the delivery man must have felt dealing with a man like him.

Wallace makes his way over to the dining room and sets the enormous bag of food on the cherry oak table that his wife had picked out.

His hand glides across the glistening wood, memories of family filled dinners enter his mind. Wallace jerks his hand back from the painful thoughts and heads to the kitchen to grab plates and utensils. The cabinet creaks open, revealing white porcelain plates and clear glass cups. He grabs three cups, three plates and three forks from the utensil drawer. He walks back into the dining room, the only clean room left in the whole house. He sets the plates just like they used too and sits in the same spot he did before.

Pictures sit in place of the people now missing from his life. Wallace's beautiful daughter sits to his right with her house specialties fried rice and three sugar rolls. His glorious wife sits to his left with her shrimp chow mein and five sugar rolls. And there Wallace sits, with his beef chow mein and five sugar rolls, tears running down his face. He eats in silence, alone with his thoughts and pictures of his loved ones.

Wallace wakes up to the feeling of dread filling his mind. *Today's the day*, he thinks to himself. He struggles to get out of bed as the muted smell of his wife's lavender perfume rises from the vacant spot next to him. The smell of the perfume is a sharp contrast to his own disgusting scent. The memories of his wife make his heart swell and leftover tears fill his eyes as he rises from his fluffy prison.

Wallace doesn't bother to get dressed, it's not like anyone cares enough to come see if he is okay. He walks down the cluttered hall and his eyes fall upon the newspaper clipping of the accident, "Wife and Daughter Killed in Drive-By Shooting". The date reads, July 1st, 2016, the same date the calendar read in the kitchen. Wallace's eyes tear up more than before as he realizes just exactly how many years have passed without them in his life.

He slowly enters the kitchen, wall to wall with trash and empty boxes. Wallace opens the fridge and the smell of rotting food fills the room. He doesn't even react to the rancid smell, he smells worse. He pushes the first layer of food that fills the fridge away and reaches for the takeout from last night. He removes the house specialties fried rice from the fridge and begins to sob. He closes the fridge and falls to the floor.

He sits there for a little bit, until it hits him. Wallace realizes that he doesn't have to wait to meet his family again, that he could join them anytime he likes. His eyes fall on the drawer holding the gun that his wife never wanted in the house in the first place. He doesn't walk over to the drawer but instead crawls slowly towards it. Wallace reaches up and opens the drawer, he pulls too hard, the drawer hitting him on the head. He is already in so much pain that he doesn't realize that there is a cut on his head causing blood to rush into his eyes, and blindly grabs for the gun that had slid away from him. Wallace's hand hits the cool metal and begins to wonder if anyone would miss him. His parents had died years earlier, he has no siblings and his in-laws hadn't even spoken to him since his wife and daughters funeral. He realizes that he is truly alone. He thinks about the delivery man and everyone who looked at him in disgust at the grocery store. He lifts the gun and places it under one of his many neck rolls. He closes his eyes and images of the disgusted looks fill his mind. He pulls the trigger and he is released from the pain of living.

No one found his body until his landlord came to check up on the rent. It showed up in the newspaper a few months later. The delivery man saw the article and shook his head in shock, *I didn't think...* he thought to himself. Wallace's in-laws don't hear about it for another month and don't even shed a tear, *that's what he gets for putting our daughter in danger*, they thought.

The people at the grocery store saw it in the local news, *it was only a matter of time*, they thought. But did any of them actually know?

Writing Activity

1. In Emileigh's "Dear Straight White Male Politicians," she is writing not to one specific person, but rather she has written an "open letter" to a group that represents an idea/practice she is opposed to. Pick an issue --- an issue that you are intimately involved with because it is wrapped up in your personal identity; for example: being a woman, being an African American, being a Muslim --- and write an "open letter" to those who represent groups that you believe have no business making decisions about you.
2. "Privilege" can be a term that causes some people to get defensive or to feel guilty, but the "privilege" that Emileigh refers to in her poem is simply the fact that certain people enjoy unearned benefits because society has been built up to cater to and care for them for no other reason than because of the color of their skin or the gender with which they identify. "Male Privilege" shines a light on the everyday norms that allow men to be comfortable wherever they go and "to take up two seats" while women are told to keep their legs shut. Naming's one "privilege" --- gender, race, age, nationality (those identifiers that you are simply born with) --- can help one prepare to take steps to "even the scales." Consider what role "privilege" plays in *your* life and write about how *you* could take steps to share more space with others or how you are going to need for others to share more space with you.
3. Compare Emileigh's poem "The Moon" to her other poems, "Dear Straight White Male Politicians" and "Male Privilege." In her first two poems, she details the woes and inequality that women are often subjected to by others (specifically, men), but in this last poem she gives power back to women. Think of a symbol of power for yourself and write a poem or story in which the character rises up and no longer feels afraid.
4. In her short story, "Misconception," Emileigh instructs readers to consider "how your interaction with someone will affect them in the future." Take time throughout your day to notice the little moments, the brief interactions you have with people --- strangers, families, teachers, friends. Now, select one of those moments --- just a brief greeting, a quick glance --- and "explode the moment." Writers use the practice of "exploding the moment" to add details, descriptions, depth to their stories. Take something tiny about your day and turn it into a story full of description, details, and dialogue.