

Essay

1st Place

Memoir of a Green Hand

by **Stephen Kyle Roelfsema**

“You stupid retard!” cried Pat.

I had taken a summer position in the oilfields of Alberta to help fund my mounting educational costs.

I knew the “patch” was hard work, but I was actually looking forward to getting my hands a little dirty, as my Dad and Uncle had done at my age. To me this was an adventure and I was ready for it, or so I thought. . .

“You’ll probably get heckled a little bit,” said my Dad, a man of the patch since the tender age of nineteen. “Just remember, don’t take it personally. It’s just their way of having a little bit of fun.” I can deal with that, I thought. I love a good prank, even if it is at my expense. See, I understood that I was going in as a green hand; I was raw, knew nothing, and I wasn’t about to demand respect or even expect it in that type of environment. What I did expect, however, was to be treated with human decency.

I knew things weren’t going to go well my second day on the lease. Pat had asked me to clean some drip trays and afterwards, stack them near the rig. Travis, the other Roughneck had seen me cleaning the trays and told me to stack them near the five-ton truck as this would be a more appropriate place for them. It made sense to me as well. Two hours later, and trays being the furthest

thing from my mind in the blazing thirty degree heat (Celsius), I heard someone yell for me.

“Green!”

They sounded pissed.

“Ya.” I wasn’t sure what the problem was; I was cleaning up as told.

“What the F&*k is this?”

“What do you mean Pat?”

“I told you to put these trays by the rig.”

“Well ya, I know you did but Travis said. . .”

“I’m the boss, not Travis. Now move those trays.”

“Ok Pat. Sorry about that.”

It was the first time he had pulled rank on me and it was a little disturbing since he technically wasn’t my boss, the Tool push, Cam, was. I blew it off; the heat was getting to us all.

Fast forward four weeks.

“Why wouldn’t you bring the water jug Green?”

“Well I brought two flats of pop plus the extra jug is still here from yesterday, and the forecast said the high today was going to be 20 degrees. I didn’t really think that we needed it.”

It was my turn to buy lunch for the crew. I brought steak, corn on the cob, macaroni salad and drinks for everyone.

Maybe I spent over a hundred bucks on groceries because I was sick of eating low grade hamburgers from a bag,

but more than likely I was looking for respect after four weeks of mental abuse.

“So you took it upon yourself to decide whether or not we needed water?”

“Well, there’s still a full jug here and we’ve never finished one let alone two. We should be fine.”

“It’s your job to bring the water jug.”

“Actually, Pat, it’s my job to learn how to work on the rigs.”

He was in my face now, trying to get me to back down. I didn’t. . .

I’ll admit I threw the first punch, I’ll also admit that I threw the last one.

I’m not sorry for what I did; maybe he’ll think twice about how he treats his next Green Hand.

“Spool your rags Green, you’re going home.”

2nd Place (tie)

Restored

by Welton Cochran

That Saturday the dew looked like glitter from the morning sun, a beautiful day was in the forecast. I sat behind the wheel of my car, a ‘63 Pontiac GTO which had been around as long as me; my wife and companion for fifteen years sat in front, while our twelve-year-old daughter occupied the back seat. The engine, tuned so fine, purred as we drove. The new paint job produced a mirror image reflection; the sun’s bright rays danced on the surrounding objects, from stop signs to houses, as they bounced off the polished chrome of the wheels and bumpers. Over the last six years, the two “loves” of my

life often told me of how glad they were that I began the restoration, and provided the motivation to stick with it. The improvements turned out to be quite noticeable. We weren’t headed for any place special, just a cruise around our hometown, a small town populated by about nine hundred people.

Soon, we were driving by the post office; “Good morning, Pastor,” I yelled out from across the other side of the street as I passed by. As he gave me a smile and a wave, I thought of the times, during the restoration, when he told me, “Just hang in there. You’ll be so glad you did it.” I turned and idled towards the north end of town and took a left. I drove by Ben’s house, the home of a once close friend, a friend since childhood; looking out from under the hood of his haggard car, he glanced at me, looked back at the engine, slammed the hood, and walked away with a look of discontent. He’d once told me that he was jealous I started restoring, and preferred we hung out like we used to. We weaved through the streets; my gratitude came as I saw expressions of amazement on the faces of people we met during our drive. I’m certain most people remembered the car’s condition before the restoration.

It wasn’t always in this good of shape. I acquired the old Pontiac from my dad the summer I graduated from high school. It had a few dents, and ran good enough to shuttle me to work and parties, so it suited me fine. Within a few years, the car rapidly deteriorated. The engine acted up, it burned oil, coughed and spit, in serious need of an overhaul. The joints, lacking grease, squeaked and groaned. The car became a nuisance with its loud exhaust, and a hazard with its faulty brakes. Disappointed and frustrated by the car’s poor performance,

I tended to take it out on the body; I slammed the doors, kicked it, beat it, and busted parts inside and out. The more frequently it happened, the worse it got until I didn't give a damn about the car. Caught in a habit, slowly the car turned into a pathetic heap, hardly worthwhile for repair.

The abuse continued for about eighteen years, and neglect took its toll; lack of maintenance caused the engine and chassis to become inefficient and unreliable. It barely started in the mornings, and at times made me late for work; I wondered if the time arrived to pull the keys. Unsure of the outcome, I put it in the garage, out of sight, as I considered its fate.

Two days later, I entered the garage and looked at the car with clear eyes; I walked around the car, and examined the dents and creases, the bent bumper, the torn seats, and the cracked headlight. I made my way to the side mirror, looked and saw the same characteristics of the car in the reflection--the image made me sick to my stomach. I had done to the car what alcohol had done to me. Similar to the car, lack of maintenance brought my mind and body to its destiny. I could imagine people saying, 'what a shame, the old car had so much potential to be something great.' I pondered a few minutes on the dilapidated condition of the car and myself. Maybe, I shouldn't change a thing; cars in worse condition than mine drove by our house all the time. Then, I reached the conclusion I no longer wanted to be an embarrassment to myself, family, and loved ones. I didn't like to be seen this way; I knew it was time for an image change.

It was going to be a challenge; I needed to be determined and stay focused to reach my goal. The

restoration would take time and patience, but I believed each day would be more satisfying. I had to repair the drive train first; if the engine failed to run smoothly and the chassis to work properly, the frustrations might lead to old habits. Overhaul, tune up, and carburetor kits cured the engine's coughing and spitting, improving its efficiency and reliability. I tightened the bolts and a little grease allowed the joints to move freely yet securely; the car became more dependable every day. New exhaust silenced the noise, and I repaired the brakes so I could stop and proceed with caution. With the mechanical issues under control, I began to pound out the dents; I found some too deep and temporarily patched them with putty, knowing someday I might need to fix them properly should the patches ever let loose. Or maybe, some will be patched so well the blemish will be forever forgotten. I replaced missing trim, and upholstered the seats; slowly, the ugliness of the past disappeared.

Soon after I stopped drinking, and with a proper diet and some exercise, I felt healthier, energetic, and hopeful. I grew stronger and gained stability every day. I still frequented the bars to visit with friends. I found their behavior to be annoying and depressing, and discovered that many of my behaviors could use some modifying. I learned to be quiet and listen, stop complaining, be responsible, and be aware of temptations. With a clear head, I mended wounds and scars created in my alcohol-use days; my daughter is no longer compelled to stay in her room to avoid the undesired images of her dad. I'm able to walk without mumbling to my feet, but look around, find, and welcome the pieces of my life and put them in their place.

I hope others, faced with any form of alcoholism, will make the decision to stop drinking and continue improving themselves to gain the dignity they desire. I have found value in my life, like the car, and I need to be aware that it will only take one ding, dent, or accident, and the deterioration process can start over again. To prevent reverting back to my old ways, I constantly remind myself of the necessity to improve for those I cherish.

My wife and daughter saw the improvements immediately, provided constant encouragement, and received as much pleasure and joy from the restoration as me. The pastor sees the change and prays it gets even better; I pray for my old friends, whose vehicles have become battered, that, they too, can find the courage to change. I understand how the people who watched me deteriorate, probably remember what the car and I used to look like, but maybe, once I keep it maintained long enough they, too will forget. Strangers who see my car, see it as it is, not knowing its past, and if someone else tries to tell them, they will find it hard to believe. Proud of what I accomplished, I drive it with pride.

2nd Place (tie)

Lady Macbeth and Desdemona:

How Shakespeare's Women Control the Actions of Their Significant Others

by Valerie Schultz

Men have always been considered leaders, both in society and in domestic roles. However, it is said

that while men are the “head,” women are the “neck.” Women play a vital role in history, yet they do not receive the same recognition as their male counterparts. In a number of William Shakespeare's plays, female characters control the actions of males, whether intentionally or not. In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth uses the psychological concept of “femiphobia” to push her husband into action, eventually leading to several murders and her own death, while in *Othello*, the jealousy caused by an artificial affair between Desdemona and Cassio leads Othello to seek the ultimate revenge against his wife.

The concept of masculinity is extremely important in societal relationships. A man's desire for masculinity shapes many of his actions. Within every man is a deep-seeded fear of appearing feminine, known by some psychologists as *femiphobia* (Schneider 1). This fear often goes unrecognized by the man himself and leads to *hypermasculinity*, which is identifiable by the “macho” acts of a man (Scheff 1). Due to this fear, he acts in a way that is the exact opposite of any feminine characteristics, such as offering comfort or responding emotionally.

In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth makes the mistake of questioning Macbeth's masculinity. She hopes it will encourage him to act, which it does. However, in doing so, she sets off a chain of events that ultimately lead to the destruction of her husband as well as herself. In the first act, the two decide that in order for Macbeth to claim his throne, he must first murder King Duncan. Soon, Macbeth begins to doubt their plan and shares his fears with his wife. This reaction is unacceptable to Lady Macbeth. Men are taught at a young age that vulnerable feelings, such

as love and fear, are signs of weakness, and Lady Macbeth expects nothing different (Scheff 2). "We will proceed no further in this business," Macbeth tells her. Upon hearing of her husband's sudden change of heart, she replies, "Art thou afeared to be the same in thine own act and valor as thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that which thou esteem'st the ornament of life, and live a coward in thine own esteem, letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,' like the poor cat i'th adage?" The two continue to argue what a "man" would do in such a situation. "I dare do all that may become a man," states Macbeth; "who dares to do more is none." Lady Macbeth retaliates by saying, "When you durst do it, then you were a man; and to be more than what you were, you would be so much more than man" (I.vii.32-53). With these words and the way they deprive Macbeth of his masculinity, she begins the self-destruction of her husband.

By killing King Duncan, Macbeth has been psychologically trained to ignore his fear, and by instructing him to overlook the emotions that go with the murder, Lady Macbeth trains him to no longer show love or compassion either. "Consider it not so deeply," she says, as Macbeth describes to her his agonizing inability to utter prayers after the murder. "These deeds must not be thought after these ways; so, it will make us mad" (II.ii.33, 37-38). He no longer fears, and he no longer loves. Lady Macbeth erased his two weakest characteristics.

Macbeth's lack of visible fear allows him to do whatever necessary to gain and maintain his position as king. However, the justifications for his actions are quite unrealistic, such as the apparent threat posed by Banquo and his

son. By this point, Lady Macbeth sees that her attempts to push Macbeth towards what was rightly his have gone too far, but it is too late to turn back. "You must leave this," she commands her husband. He replies, "O full of scorpions in my mind, dear wife. Thou knowst that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives" (III.iii.37-39). Macbeth desires not only to maintain his throne, but to prove that he is a man, by word and by deed. He will not be thought weak.

Macbeth murders man after man, and Lady Macbeth begins to realize the extent of her responsibility in the shedding of such innocent blood. She eventually loses her sanity over essentially causing so many deaths at the hand of her husband. Her actions mirror the actions of the two after the death of the initial victim, King Duncan. The doctor and gentlewoman comment on how she rubs her hands constantly, in an attempt to perhaps wash herself of the sin and the blood those killed (V.i.26-29). When she begins to speak, she mutters the words she spoke to Macbeth prior to the king's murder, saying, "Fie, my lord, fie! A soldier and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?" Immediately afterwards, she states, "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him" (V.i.33-37). She knew what to expect with the death of the king, but she did not know what to expect of the death of Macbeth's compassion.

Love no longer exists for Macbeth, nor does fear. Upon hearing a shriek come from within his home, he feels nothing. "I have almost forgot the taste of fear," he says, "the time had been my senses would have cooled to hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir

as were life in;t...cannot one start me” (V.v.9-15). He is not in the least bit startled by this scream. After receiving word that it came from the mouth of his wife, he does not appear to be shaken whatsoever.

If it were not for Macbeth’s lack of fear and compassion, he would have never been killed himself. His beheading was an act of war against King Macbeth in order to rid the country of a tyrant leader. This lack of emotion can be traced back to the attacking words of Lady Macbeth, words she used to make Macbeth question his own masculinity.

Macbeth is not the only Shakespearean example where a woman’s slight words or actions lead to the destruction of both her husband and herself. In *Othello*, Desdemona does so without even doing anything out of the ordinary. Her husband is convinced of her infidelity, a deadly misunderstanding on his part. The jealousy that follows eventually leads to the unraveling of the lives of both Othello and Desdemona.

Men are psychologically wired differently than women in a number of ways, including causes of their jealousy. A woman is most affected by emotional betrayal, while a man is more deeply hurt when he suspects that his partner might be sexually unfaithful. Men also have a greater desire to seek revenge over their jealousy, finding more pleasure in this action than women (Wheldon 2). The slightest possibility of a wife or partner’s infidelity can set off a man’s jealous reactions.

Desdemona, recently married to the Moor, Othello, does not act out in any major way to cause Othello’s outrage. His *false* suspicions of her unfaithfulness eat away at his mind until

he finds his revenge in the death of both his wife and the lieutenant, Cassio.

The villainous Iago has Othello under his psychological control throughout the majority of the play. Once he decides how he will seek revenge on the Moor for sexual actions performed before the timeline of the play, he begins to use the trust he built up with Othello to plant seeds of doubt in his mind (II.i.291-293). He plans to lead Othello into “a jealousy so strong that judgment cannot cure” (II.i.298-299). Iago’s simple remarks begin to push Othello towards questioning his wife’s faithfulness.

The first moments of Othello’s doubt are brought upon by Iago’s own false questioning of Cassio’s and Desdemona’s actions. Iago knows that there is little to worry about between the two, but *that* would not serve his purpose of destroying Othello. He is aware of the friendship between Cassio and Othello and uses that to drive Othello’s anger even further. “Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?” asks Othello as he enters the stage, catching a glimpse of a man fleeing in the other direction. “Cassio my lord?” says Iago. “I cannot think it, that he would steal away so *guiltlike*, seeing you come” (III.iii.37-40). With one statement, Iago sets off the chain of emotions that lead to Othello’s destruction.

From this point on, Othello cannot help but doubt his wife’s actions. Shortly after Iago begins questioning why Cassio would leave so quickly upon his arrival, Othello is visibly irritated with his wife’s concerns of Cassio’s well-being (III.iii.45-86). Iago takes this opportunity to further spark Othello’s doubts. After discovering that Cassio knew of Othello’s attraction to Desdemona and that Cassio was a sort of

“go-between” in their beginning stages, Iago shows more staged interest and unsettledness, causing Othello to once again question why his worry over Cassio’s involvement in their marriage (III.iii.94-116). Iago has yet to mention anything about infidelity, but Othello’s blood already boils at the very thought of *anything* occurring between Cassio and Desdemona.

Not only is Othello finding it almost impossible to not doubt his wife’s actions, but he is quickly losing the respectful composure he has become known for. However, he is determined not to jump to conclusions. “Not from mine own weak merits will I draw the smallest fear or doubt of her revolt, for she had eyes and chose me,” he says. “No, Iago; I’ll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove; and on the proof there is no more but this – away at once with love or jealousy” (III.iii.187-192). He knows that he cannot both love Desdemona and show jealousy towards her, but he cannot help but think of the possibility of her guilt.

Iago enjoys every moment of Othello’s pain and rage. His wife, Emilia, announces that Desdemona dropped her handkerchief, which was given to her by Othello. Now that Iago has control of this gift, he has complete control over Othello. “The Moor already changes with my poison,” he says. “Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons, which at the first are scarce found to distaste, but with a little act upon the blood, burn like the mines of sulphur” (III.iii.325-329). Desdemona’s carelessness with this handkerchief changes Othello’s views on her innocence, therefore changing his fate as well as her own.

By the time Iago mentions Desdemona’s handkerchief, Othello’s

mind has nearly been destroyed by his jealousy. He believes that if he had not known of the infidelity of his wife, he would remain sane. “I had been happy if the general camp, pioneers and all, had tasted her sweet body, so I had nothing known” he says. “O, now forever farewell the tranquil mind! Farewell content!” (III.iii.345-349). With his mind now shattered from the psychological abuse he has been subjected to, he will never be the same person. He is so worked up over the entire incident that he declares that if Desdemona’s innocence is proven, Iago will have a great price to pay. “Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore!” he says to Iago. “Be sure of it; give me the ocular proof; or by the worth of mine eternal soul, thou hadst better have been born a dog than answer my waked wrath!” (III.iii.359-163). When Iago lies to Othello about witnessing Cassio with Desdemona’s handkerchief, Othello’s reluctance to believe the stories of his wife’s infidelity are replaced with rage and a desire for revenge (III.iii.437-461). His character takes a turn for the worst, as he has lost all hope in Desdemona’s innocence.

Othello’s words and actions completely shift after discovering for himself that his wife misplaced her handkerchief. Desdemona says that she has never seen him act in such a way (III.iv.99-100). The focus of the play switches from the false accusation of Desdemona to the vengeful thoughts and actions of Othello.

Othello, after being convinced of the affair occurring between his wife and his colleague, no longer considers Desdemona’s innocence to be a possibility and resolves to make her pay for her actions. He ignores the input of Emilia as well as the pleas of his own

wife in their bed (IV.ii.3-16, V.ii.22-83). In a matter of seconds, Othello smothers his wife nearly to death while uttering the words, "It is too late" (V.ii.84). It is, in deed, too late, not only for Desdemona, but for Othello as well. He has now sealed his own fate as well. Desdemona breathes her last breath, and Othello, realizing what he has done to his beloved, follows shortly afterward by stabbing himself (V.ii.125-126; V.ii.356). For these two characters, there is no more fatal of a misunderstanding.

The Shakespearean women in *Macbeth* and *Othello* truly shaped the actions of their husbands. Lady Macbeth used her sharp words as a sword to pierce Macbeth's ego. Her words immediately caused the death of King Duncan, while further down the road, they eventually caused her death and the death of her husband as well. The mere thought of Desdemona's possible infidelity leads Othello into the depths of jealousy and despair. This jealousy smothers both him and his wife, the latter literally. These women guide their powerful husbands in a direction that neither initially expects. They underestimate their own influence over men, therefore condemning themselves and their husbands to death.

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Third-World Offerings

by *Kimberly Wanner*

The nights are the most difficult time. My memories of Guatemala almost always appear. Before I fall asleep, my mind races with the thoughts of all that I experienced, felt, and learned from my pilgrimage to a third-world country. Sometimes the thoughts just haunt me; sometimes they fill me with awe and beauty.

The summer after I graduated from high school, I visited Guatemala through The GOD'S CHILD Project, a non-profit organization which stresses health, education, and human rights. Sometimes, especially at night, I ask God why he called me to visit a third-world country or why he exposed me to so many difficulties, as well as blessings. Now I also must question if I am meant to return to Guatemala with the group that I traveled with previously. I recently asked the director of the pilgrimage if I could possibly join the group again, and am awaiting his reply. I learned so many important concepts the first time I went to Guatemala. I wonder if I should return to learn more about the way God offers Himself through the people there and through me. Because of my previous experiences in a third-world country, I can seek the traits and opportunities that I possess to realize how God calls me to live for Him.

Through my stay in a third-world country, I learned that freedom consisted of saying a simple "yes" to accept my calling. A few weeks after returning from Guatemala, I received an e-mail back from Miguel, one of the boys who resides in the house I helped build. Excited about hearing how he and his family were enjoying their new home, I quickly translated the letter and began to

read. Suddenly, my reading slowed when Miguel expressed that sometimes he felt as though he was responsible for his family's poverty. As I continued to read, Miguel addressed that though this feeling arose within him at times, he understands that God wants him to be raised in his family. He respects that he needs to stay with his family and help them in any way that he can.

After witnessing how Miguel looked at his life and identified his need to help his family, I discovered my ability, my freedom, to go to a third-world country. I did not need to go to Guatemala; yet, I always wanted to, felt called to visit a third-world country, and acted on that realization. I learned that freedom stands beyond the procedure of wanting to do something; freedom relies on recognizing the life we already have, but also making the choices we need to with the understanding of right and wrong. Through this experience, I became aware that as long as I accept my position and take into regard the right decision, no one can ever take away my true freedom.

After realizing this concept behind freedom, I soon made another new discovery, this time about trust. My last day there, I visited a malnutrition center, where one nurse tries to comfort over 50 babies and young children. At the end of the day, when most of the group prayed in the chapel, I decided to spend some time with the babies. I introduced myself and played peek-a-book with Gustavo, a one-year-old boy with big brown eyes and a beautiful smile. Ducking under the crib, I would shout out, "adios," followed by "hola" when I popped back up. I gave Gustavo a hug and said, "Te quiero"—I love you. Finally, I noticed everyone had left to the chapel. I felt that I should go, as

well; leaving him—saying that final adios—became so difficult. As I laid him back down, I prayed his beautiful smile would never leave his face, because I did not know when that smile would return again. Gustavo was the last child I held in Guatemala.

I realized something very important from this one-year-old boy: I learned how to trust. Though I did not know who would take care of him—who would love him—I had to understand that God still watched over Gustavo. Remembering the difficulty of struggling with the concept of leaving these unfortunate children in such a poor country, God supplied me with the strengthening grace of trust. I realized that I could not stay with these children; moreover, I realized that these children, though they suffer so, remain in such an environment for a reason much greater than I can fully comprehend. Months later, I still miss Gustavo and pray he is well, but, I must remind myself to trust that I carried out my part in giving him comfort. I will also trust that if the true desire to return to Guatemala fills my heart, God will supply the path to go back.

Just as saying “yes” was so important, I learned that finding the beauty and significance of each situation also affects how I see everything that I take up. This concept occurred to me while I helped build a house for a poor family near Antigua. Constructing the house contained many difficult tasks, such as pouring the cement, as well as hauling 20-foot wet wooden boards up a steep cobblestone hill to the worksite. While I hauled the boards—sweat dripping from my face—I suddenly had an epiphany. My task resembled the feat of Jesus carrying His cross to Calvary. One of my favorite prayers then came to

my mind: “For the sake of his sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.” This small prayer remained very real to me, as I realized I could—in a small way—experience Jesus’ sorrowful passion. Suddenly, I took charge of the clear opportunity in front of me by relating my feelings, my aspirations, and my pains to Jesus going through His sufferings for me. I knew that I could offer up to Jesus my troubles; and I also knew that the only way that I could live my life and fulfill my calling remained step-by-step.

When I left for Guatemala, I did not know how I could help the people there. Now I can witness the way God enabled me to aid them. God allowed me, through my willingness to visit Guatemala, to offer my time and to contribute my skills and talents. As my personal experience with the carrying of my own cross expressed, God made a difference through my endurance and strength to a humble Guatemalan family, and even gave me a chance to grow. Furthermore, this understanding goes beyond the gifts in Guatemala, but reaches toward living my life now and preparing for my future. This lesson teaches me to try to capture and utilize every moment as signs of the way God wants me to live my life. Through traveling to Guatemala I did not only receive the chance to learn about the Guatemalans, but also to perceive my life, my purpose, in a new light.

My next step involves answering the question whether to return to Guatemala or not. The more I reviewed how much I experienced, the more I realized the meaning of a true pilgrimage. Because of my religious devotion to God, I believed I needed to follow His calling for me to visit Guatemala. While there, I kept searching

for better understanding of life. I felt as though God kept teaching me so much and I needed to continue to recognize so much, too much to receive in just one pilgrimage. This brought me to the conclusion to go back to Guatemala, if I am invited and finances allow. Now I recognize my true purpose of visiting Guatemala: to continually look for God and the teachings He keeps providing me. However, if I do not return to Guatemala because of difficulties, I believe that my experiences and lessons there will still continually appear to me.

These lessons will not only appear through the memories of Guatemala, but also with the ability to recognize and grow from occurrences and signs in my everyday life. Through these realizations, I can utilize every moment God gives me to continually discover where He keeps leading me. God offered me a great deal in Guatemala, but through that experience I realize that He continually offers me graces each and every moment of my life.



Sleeping Little One

Photograph

Chandra Dewald

Unknown Wisdom

by Jessica Hintz

On a Friday night two weeks ago, some high school classmates and I decided to go to our principal's wedding anniversary at the Lone Steer Motel in Steele, North Dakota. As we walked in, I thought to myself, "Wow, just what I want to do on a Friday night...catch up with my former teachers." When we walked into the room, I saw a ton of familiar faces, and memories started flooding my head. I glanced across the room and I noticed Vance, my high school counselor. He was wearing his usual—khakis, a pullover jacket and a baseball cap. My friends and I eventually made our way over to him. His face lit up with a huge smile, and he greeted each of us with a firm handshake like he always did. We talked about countless memories of our senior year and our new lives as college students. While standing there with Vance, I began to realize how big an impact he made in my life. I admire Vance because he helped resolve issues between my parents and I, he encouraged me on my career decision, and he made me realize that even though tragic events happen, life goes on.

In the second week of January, during my senior year, deadlines for college applications were approaching. I had no idea where to go or for what. I had been stressing for weeks and the pressure my parents put on me didn't help the matter. I realized I needed help, but it took me another week before I did anything about it. The following Wednesday, I decided to talk with Vance. After third hour, I started my way down the hall, past the water fountain, and around the corner to Vance's office. I felt rather nervous, which

seemed odd considering I visited there many times before. As I approached the open door, I saw Vance sitting in his office on his maroon chair, listening to “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.” Hearing that tune relieved my nervousness. I knocked on the door and walked in.

“Hey there, how’s it going?” Vance said.

“Hi, pretty good. And you?” I replied.

“Oh I’m doing great!”

“That’s good. I’m actually here because I need some advice about college.”

“Well I’m glad you came. I’ll do my best.”

I told Vance I had been accepted to NDSU to major in optometry but was having second thoughts about my decision. I explained to him I wanted to be in a smaller college closer to home, and I was considering majoring in Elementary Education. He thought my idea seemed brilliant and supported me 100%. He told me he always thought I’d be the perfect teacher but wanted me to follow my dreams. He then recommended VCSU and suggested I schedule a tour. We immediately called VCSU and set up a date and time for me to check the college out. After I left Vance’s room that day, I felt like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. His support and encouragement in my decision made it so much easier for me to make a choice that would affect the rest of my life.

Two months prior to this, Vance helped me in a way he probably doesn’t even realize. November finally came, and my 18th birthday quickly approached. My parents and I hadn’t been getting along at all. I lost some very important loved ones in my life earlier in the year, and turning my sadness into

anger, I took it out on my parents. This caused our relationship to go downhill; we never talked and were always avoiding each other.

My birthday finally came. My best friend and I thought it would be fun to drive up to Michael Jay’s Tattoo and Piercing Parlor in Bismarck, and get tattoos together. So we did. My parents weren’t impressed with the idea and this really set them off. The next morning, my dad came downstairs to my room, woke me up, and ordered me to come upstairs immediately. Since it was only seven o’clock in the morning and I could have slept another 45 minutes, I grew quite angry. I rolled out of bed in my pajamas and stomped my way up to my parents’ bedroom. As soon as I opened their door, I knew it wasn’t good.

“So did you get a tattoo?” Mom mumbled.

“Um...yeah,” I muttered.

That was all it took. Mom pointed her finger at me and started hollering, and then Dad joined in so they were both yelling at me at the same time. I didn’t listen. What they said went in one ear and out the other. After awhile, I broke down and fell to the floor sobbing. I felt bad that I disobeyed my parents, but I just was so sick of them at the time that I didn’t even care. After crying for a while, I realized my parents weren’t the problem. I finally admitted I needed some help. Still upset about losing people so close to me, I knew I was depressed. I had no idea how to handle it, so I took it out on others, especially my parents.

That day, while I was sitting in first period History class, my principal called me to his office over the intercom. I went to his office and sat down on one of the chairs in front of his desk. He told me my mom just called him and

explained everything. I was furious. How could my mom do that? What was she thinking? Does she even know how much I dislike this guy? He then suggested I meet with Vance. I agreed, went to Vance's office, and explained the whole situation from beginning to end while he listened. He encouraged me that everything would be all right and he would talk to my parents for me. He explained everything to them. I only met with Vance about three times and my issues eventually disappeared. My parents and I started interacting better than ever before. We actually conversed together which was something new. It didn't take much, but Vance knew exactly how to find the solution. If it wasn't for him, I'm not sure I would be talking to my parents to this day. It really meant a lot to me and I never realized what I was truly missing. From then on, I decided not to miss out on the little things in life.

I hope for my outlook on life to someday be what Vance's is. He made me realize we don't have to take life for granted, and no matter what, it will go on. Vance knows firsthand how difficult life can be. Even being diagnosed with throat cancer didn't stop him, it only made him stronger. He went to the Mayo Clinic for radiation many times throughout his illness, but he still returned to the school to help others. I'll never forget one of the days he was back and we were visiting. He said that while at the clinic he saw all these young children suffering with a disease that most of them wouldn't likely beat. He shared how he would walk down the halls and these kids would be laughing and playing and he didn't really understand how they could be so happy. After a while, he realized the children probably knew if they would make it or

not, and decided not to spend their final days sad, laying in a hospital bed. They did what they enjoyed most. After realizing this, he knew he wanted to do what he enjoyed best every day for the rest of his life. And that was just being happy. A quote of his is, "I'm having a bad hour, not a bad day. Why waste a day making it bad because who knows what day will be your last?" This is one of my favorite quotes. It states how precious life is and that it shouldn't be taken for granted.

My friends and I didn't stay at the anniversary party for long, but I left with more than I came with. I'll never forget these words that Vance said:

"Why is it you kids remember the stupid stuff I say, but never remember my wisdom?"

"What wisdom?" Chris, a classmate of mine, replied.

To them this quote was just a little joke, but it really struck me. As I drove home that night, I realized that if it wasn't for Vance's wisdom I probably wouldn't be where I am today. Vance impacted me in so many ways, and I will carry his wisdom with me throughout my whole life. After all, it is his wisdom through which I find strength to keep going in times I feel like giving up.

The Cabin of My Dreams

by Kimberly Stelter

The sunsets—that is what I love most about the lake. The bright oranges, reds, purples, blues, and pinks that are painted across the sky each night over the island are simply magnificent. The painting changes each night and just when I think that there will never be a more beautiful one, the next night proves

me wrong again. Some of my best and most vivid memories are of me sitting on the dock with my bare feet skimming the water and watching the sun as it sets on another glorious day at the lake.

My family's cabin sits on the shore of German Lake and has been a part of my life since the very beginning. On the outside, the cabin may not look like much; however, the inside holds memories of four generations. The countless summer days that were spent by my family and me out at the lake are irreplaceable. I learned how to swim, fish, wakeboard, and drive a boat there. The place holds so many memories that make me smile, laugh, and sometimes even cry.

The memories that I have of the cabin will never leave me, but in the next few years the cabin might. As my Dad considers building a permanent home on the lake, I am feeling bittersweet about losing the cabin. Without the cabin, so many things seem to be lost. Activities and feelings that I can only associate with that cabin could be lost and forgotten forever.

One activity that is always memorable is putting in the dock. When I was little, I could not do much, but I liked to sit and watch as my Dad and older brother puffed and huffed to get the old dock into the water. The pieces sure looked heavy as they set the steel standards into the sand. After those were in place, they lugged out the eight-foot pieces of redwood docking to set on them. Even after they got all the pieces out there, it seemed to take forever for them to use wrenches and ratchets to make sure each individual piece was level. When I was old enough, I would run tools out to them so they would not have to get out of the water. If I was really lucky, my Dad would let me

pound in the nails that had worked their way out of the wood. I always felt good when I got to help. Those kinds of things were exciting for a little girl!

This and many other memories are very near and dear to my heart, but as I think about them now, they can also be a little sad with the prospect of losing the cabin.

The idea of building a house out there has been around for a long time. My grandparents had talked about doing it when my Grandpa retired, but nothing every came of it. When my Dad started talking about building, I did not really take him seriously. This wishing was normal, and our lives were so busy we would never have the time to build a house. Plus, like me, I do not think my Dad was ready to let go of our home yet.

But the day finally came when I started to worry that I might actually lose one of my favorite places in the world. One hot summer evening after a long day of work at the lake, my Dad and I decided to go for a quick swim to cool off. As we were sitting in our black inner tubes past the end of the dock, the conversation that would drastically change my outlook on these summer days took place. As we looked up the hill at the little cabin, my Dad asked, "So, can you picture a house sitting up there?"

The question posed took me off guard. I was not ready to discuss this. I jokingly answered, "It would sure be different." He chuckled with me and then we both got quiet. As I sat in my tube with the seaweed tickling my feet, *he said* what was going through *my* mind.

"Yep, it would be different. Different 'cause Mom's not here," he said looking wistfully out over the lake. That statement was resoundingly true.

Everything was different because she was not here.

We talked for a little longer, but I came out of that conversation only more confused about how I felt. Part of the reason I knew I did not want a new house there was because my Mom would not be in the new house to make memories with us. With the old cabin I at least had the memories of her in it, plus all of the other memories that the lake cabin holds for me.

Over the past months more talk has gone on in the family about what type of house is going to be there. I have come to accept that a new house is coming, and I am trying to look at all the good things that will come from having a new place.

In the end, I think I will have two cabins of my dreams. The new house will be a place better than I could ever imagine in my wildest dreams with a special place for everyone in the family. And, when I take a little afternoon nap on the porch of that new house I will dream about that little cabin that meant so much to me, and in that dream I will be sitting on the dock with my feet skimming the water, watching another beautiful sunset.

Hedda Gabbler:

Victims of a Power Struggle

by Valerie Schultz

Power is everything. In mankind's eyes, power makes the world go 'round. No person will deny that the human race is based on a constant struggle for power over other human beings. For example, every single nation has some sort of government that holds a certain amount of power over its

citizens. Perhaps an even better example is the power that a criminal holds over his or her victims. In such a case, the criminal, whether he or she is a murderer, rapist, or thief, steals the victim's sense of security and control. In Henrik Ibsen's play, *Hedda Gabbler*, the main character thrives off of the sense of power she feels by controlling the destiny of other characters. However, critics Sarah Lawall and Rene Wellek feel the need to declare, "We must pity her as a tortured, tormented creature caught in a web of circumstances, as a victim, in spite of her desperate struggles to dominate and control the fate of those around" (Lawall 2477). While it may be very difficult to feel any sort of pity for the power-hungry Hedda Gabbler, it may be true that she is a victim, but it is essential to describe exactly what she has fallen victim to. Regardless of her strong personality and attempts to control the lives of those around her, Hedda Gabbler, at the hands of Judge Brack, finds herself the victim of what she desired so vigorously to attain: the power to shape another's destiny.

Ibsen almost immediately reveals the character of Hedda through the dialogue between other characters in the opening scene. Within the first few lines of the play, Miss Tesman reveals that Hedda is the daughter of the late General Gabbler (Ibsen 2481). From this statement alone, one can begin analyzing her possible characteristics. The military is a symbol of power and control to many people. Hedda picked up on these aspects. Growing up with this strong of a male influence in her life, Hedda must have begun her quest for power at an early stage of life. This desire for power not only controls her own life, but it flows through her veins.

Other characteristics of Hedda quickly play themselves out in the first act. There are a number of quotes by Miss Tesman, as well as Bertha, the maid, that show she has fine tastes and is considerably spoiled or picky. For example, before readers even meet Hedda, Bertha states her concern and anxiety over her arrival and entrance into the storyline, saying she is “frightened Madam may not find (her) suitable” (Ibsen 2481). It also appears that she is rather stylish and expects others to be as well. Miss Tesman decides to buy a new hat so Hedda will not be ashamed if the two are spotted in public together (Ibsen 2483). This trait is further clarified when Mr. Tesman shares stories with his aunt about his and Hedda’s long, extravagant honeymoon. When asked about the trip and how expensive it must have been, Tesman replies, “Hedda has to do things in style...Anything less grand wouldn’t have suited her” (Ibsen 2483). These individuals have simply accepted Hedda’s demanding character and high expectations as a part of who she is.

One can also conclude from numerous comments that she is quite feminine. In a conversation between Tesman, Bertha, and Miss Tesman (Auntie Juju), Bertha describes Hedda’s personality and expectations, saying, “She’s a real lady. Wants everything just so” (Ibsen 2481). Miss Tesman later shares that she was “always surrounded by admirers” (Ibsen 2483). Her femininity plays a major part in her desire for power, although, as readers will later see, not necessarily to her benefit. Audience members have already painted a picture of who Hedda is and how she relates to those around her before she even enters the stage. By the time she does appear, they know her

well enough to identify the certain amount of power she holds over her husband, in-laws, and maid.

Power over another’s destiny is Hedda’s main desire, which she constantly struggles to attain. Readers are able to identify this hunger more clearly as Hedda’s character unfolds throughout the play. Manipulation and blackmail are her weapons. She gathers as much information as she can (some very personal) about her “friends” and uses that information against them. For example, Ibsen reveals that there was once a close relationship between Hedda and Eilert Loevborg (Ibsen 2509). When the time is right, she uses the information she learned during that period against him to drive him towards the beginning of his emotional and physical death (Ibsen 2513). Up to this point, readers can only, for the most part, create their own theories about her goals. However, towards the end of Act II, she declares her passion and desire in a conversation with Mrs. Elvsted: “For once in my life I want to have the power to shape a man’s destiny” (Ibsen 2515). Her goal and motivation are no longer in question, but have been admitted by Hedda herself.

Hedda strives for power but falls short due to her own personal weaknesses. One apparent weakness that she has absolutely no control over is her gender. Even in the twenty-first century, women still struggle for equality with men. When *Hedda Gabbler* was written in 1890, the different statuses between the two genders were considerably more evident. Women simply did not have any social power over men at this time.

It appears as though Hedda even struggles to attain power over her own life. She is a newly-wed, newly-

impregnated, 29-year old woman. She even admits that she only wed out of fear of being considered an “old maid,” with her own statement being, “I danced myself tired...I felt my time was up” (Ibsen 2501). Hedda conforms to the expectations of society by marrying Tesman in order to still appear respectable in society.

Hedda’s greatest personal downfall, the fear that will ultimately lead to her self-destruction, is her phobia of finding herself trapped in a scandal. She is constantly worried about what people will think of her. A number of her conversations revolve around the avoidance of this negative attention. When asked by Eilert Loevborg in Act II why she did not shoot him when she had the chance, she replies, “I was afraid. Of the scandal.” Loevborg then returns with, “Yes, Hedda. You are a coward at heart” (Ibsen 2511). She will do anything necessary to avoid being shunned in the social limelight.

Hedda is, in fact, a “coward at heart,” as Loevborg puts it. In a conversation between Loevborg and Mrs. Elvsted, the two discuss one another’s courage towards their friendship. As she listens intently to their words, Hedda mutters, “Courage. Yes. If only one had that – One might be able to live. In spite of everything” (Ibsen 2512). Her absence of emotion during this proclamation leads the audience to believe that she is well aware of her own cowardice and wishes she could find the courage to gain control of her own destiny. Without courage, it is nearly impossible for a person to be in control of their life, but is instead easy to find oneself trapped within their own life’s inevitable circumstances.

Perhaps one area where Lawall and Wellek believe Hedda felt “caught” was her marriage to George Tesman. Their relationship is not based on mutual love like one would understand a marriage to be in the twenty-first century. Like previously stated, Hedda felt the *need* to marry, finally deciding to enter into the institution with George Tesman. “We got engaged, and we got married, and we went on our honeymoon,” she shares with Brack. “I’ve – made my bed and I must now lie in it” (Ibsen 2504). Her desperation appears to have led her into an inescapable situation, and recognizes this. During this time period, men ultimately held all the power in a marriage. Hedda now finds herself socially trapped and subordinate to her husband. For this reason, she turns even more towards controlling the lives of those around her.

By the time the audience comes in contact with Hedda, Elvsted, and Loevborg, the three already have a long, complicated history. Hedda and Elvsted are old school mates who, during school, were never close to each other. Now that Elvsted notices how Hedda is beginning to show interest in her, she tells her of how she “used to be terribly frightened of (her) in those days,” revealing how intimidating Hedda was, even as a child (Ibsen 2491). This strengthens the idea that Hedda has been a power-hungry woman ever since she was a child. After her best attempt to manipulate the words spoken by Mrs. Elvsted to her advantage (which she appears to be excellent at doing), Hedda befriends her, telling her that she wants to share secrets with her like they once did (Ibsen 2492). As the play progresses, audience members can see that this sharing of secrets and personal

stories is how Hedda gains the upper-hand in her relationships.

Loevborg's and Hedda's history comes back to life now that he is back in town. The two were, at one time, very close to each other, to the point where Loevborg was convinced that Hedda was in love with him only to discover she was simply interested in gaining precious, private knowledge from him (Ibsen 2511). "You certainly poured your heart out to me," Hedda says to Loevborg. "You begged me to," he replies (Ibsen 2510). Loevborg even declares that Hedda, indeed, did have some sort of power over him, saying he "regarded (her) as a confessor," then asking her, "What power did you have over me to make me confess such things?" (Ibsen 2511). When these two meet with Elvsted, Hedda uses Loevborg's secrets against him, forcing him into consuming alcohol even though she is familiar with his past as a recovering alcoholic (Ibsen 2513). As if this were not enough, she uses his drunken acts performed during the following night against him. "To go and destroy the one thing that'd made her (Mrs. Elvsted's) life worth living," she says to Loevborg. "You don't call that heartless?" (Ibsen 2526). Loevborg's past confessions to Hedda eventually lead to his destruction, and he finds himself the most brutally affected victim of Hedda's wrath.

The death of Loevborg, in a way, leads to the death of Hedda Gabbler. Though technically only an accidental death, the weapon he carried in his shirt pocket is traced back to Hedda, but only by one man (Ibsen 2534). One man finds himself in control of the fate of this power-thirsty woman, a concept that Hedda herself finds impossible to live with.

The one person whose destiny does not appear, even in the slightest way, to be in the hands of Hedda Gabbler is Judge Brack. Besides her sexuality, she has absolutely no control over him. She holds no secrets or information about him to use to her advantage. Brack may be the closest resemblance to Hedda herself as far as the desire to control another person's life.

Judge Brack and Hedda Gabbler are almost mirror images of each other. Each has characteristics that exemplify their desire for power over another. Both have a considerable interest in knowing details about others. As previously stated, Hedda spends a decent amount of time persuading Mrs. Elvsted to share her secrets and reminding Loevborg of how he already shared his past with her. She gains power over one while reestablishing control over the other. In a similar way, Brack continuously encourages Hedda to share about her personal life and feelings towards her marriage (Ibsen 2504). Both characters also have moments where they appear to be somewhat playing off the reactions of another person. Hedda, for example, lets it "slip" that Mrs. Elvsted came to her home worried about Loevborg (Ibsen 2513). Judge Brack, in a parallel fashion, briefly mentions Loevborg's whereabouts the night he left the Tesman house (Ibsen 2521). The difference in these two cases is that Judge Brack appeared to be testing Hedda, to see if she was interested in hearing more. Hedda, on the other hand, was most likely out to get the reaction in order to cause more chaos between Mrs. Elvsted and Loevborg.

Even Brack's and Hedda's choices of words reflect each other at

times. Twice throughout the play, Hedda utters the phrase, "People don't do such things." First, she is speaking of Miss Tesman putting her hat in the Tesman's drawing room: "People don't do such things" (Ibsen 2488). Then, when speaking with Mrs. Elvsted about the red-haired woman that shot at Loevsborg, she replies, "What nonsense. People don't do such things. The kind of people we know" (Ibsen 2494). The phrase is then dropped for the rest of the play, until the cast and the audience are faced with the unexpected suicide of Ms. Hedda Gabbler.

Moments after hearing of Loevsborg's death, as soon as she senses how it feels to have been in control of another man's destiny, her own actions turn against her and create what she might consider to be her worst nightmare. Judge Brack recognizes the gun that Loevsborg held in his shirt pocket. (Ibsen 2535). Just 24 hours earlier, he found himself peering down the same barrel at the mercy of Hedda Gabbler (Ibsen 2499). Brack now holds the cards. Due to her fear of the possible scandal to follow her confession of giving Loevsborg the pistol, Brack is completely in control of their relationship. "I'm in your power, Judge," Hedda declares. "From now on, you've got your hold over me" (Ibsen 2536). However, Brack's apparent victory is cut short when Hedda makes one final attempt to regain power over her own fate. Upon finding her lifeless body, Brack reacts, "But good God! People don't do such things!" (Ibsen 2537). In an instant, audience members are reminded of the woman that originally spoke these words.

A circle has been created. Hedda held the lives of both Loevsborg and Mrs. Elvsted in the palm of her hand, leading

to the complete destruction of one life and the destruction of all that made the other's life worth living. However, when the tables turned against her, she could not handle being in the same helpless situation and finally found the courage to, in her mind, truly be in total control of her own destiny.

Both Hedda and Brack have reached the point of having complete control over the fate of an acquaintance, yet neither had the opportunity to completely enjoy their victory before their glory was abruptly cut short due to another's similar desire for power. Ibsen introduces Hedda, making her life-long love of power and control apparent. However, once she decides to marry George Tesman, she ultimately has no power over her *own* life, causing her to seek out any sort of power through her other relationships. By analyzing the dynamics of the "friendships" between Loevsborg and Hedda as well as Hedda and Elvsted, readers can identify the patterns Hedda uses to slowly gain the upper-hand in her relationships. Hedda believes she has succeeded in shaping Eilert Loevsborg's fate when she first hears of his death, but her celebration is dramatically cut short upon hearing Brack's dreadful news. The fruits of her control over Loevsborg eventually lead to her own death, as Judge Brack, in his own quest to gain control over Hedda, uses his newly-found information against her. Hedda makes a final, desperate attempt to prove that she alone is in control. In the end, neither Brack nor Hedda "win" in this competition of manipulation and blackmail. Each has their glory cut short by the power-hungry actions of the other. Both fall victim to the same criminal: karma.

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Hedda Gabler: **The Influence of Ibsen's** **Hedda on Society** by *Sara Roth*

Many women throughout history show evil tendencies, but few of them send a bolt of terror piercing throughout our bodies. A simple mention of the names compels us to fathom the very evil running through their veins. Many Jezebels try to claim their place in the hall of fame of evil and Ibsen's Hedda Gabler tops the list of potential inductees. Editors Rene Wellek and Sarah Lawall say this about Ibsen's main character: "Her moral sense is thoroughly defective: she is perverse, egotistical, sadistic, callous, even evil and demonic, truly a *femme fatale*" (Ibsen 2477). These characteristics portray Hedda in a harsh light, but more can be said for Ibsen's female character than what meets the eye. Her complex situation allows us to pity circumstances and see her as a revolutionary for women of the time. However, if that proves the case, why didn't Ibsen cast her in a more appealing light? After examining Hedda's undesirable characteristics and how she became that

way, we understand why Ibsen's portrayal of her in an undesirable light directly challenges the idea of women dominated in a patriarchal society.

The editors also state, "Undoubtedly, Hedda is the central figure of the play, but she is no conventional heroine" (2477). This could explain why Ibsen chose to portray her with cruel attributes in a tragic plotline. From the beginning of the play, we see Hedda use her cruelty to hurt those around her. When her first victim, Tesman's Auntie Juju, decides to drop in for a visit, Hedda pokes fun at the hat, a purchase she left on the chair, pretending it to be a maid's hat: "Look at that! She left her old hat lying on the chair. Suppose someone came in and saw it" (2487). Auntie Juju brushes off the remark, but we all feel her pain and rejection since the hat is new. It's meant to seem like a simple accident; however, later Hedda speaks to Judge Brack about the same event saying, "Oh, something that happened with Miss Tesman this morning. She'd put her hat down on a chair. And I pretended to think it was the servant's." Then when questioned how she could do such a thing she replies, "Sometimes a mood like that hits me. And I can't stop myself. Oh, I don't know how to explain it" (2505). We see her character begin with petty acts of meanness to portray a beginning to the evil acts to come. Our exposure to Hedda's first mean act is by far not the cruelest she will perform throughout the play and it plays as a building block for the following act.

The next victim who falls to Hedda's cruel nature is Mrs. Elvsted. We see within the following pages that the two date back in history to when they attended school together by the following:

“Mrs. Elvsted: Yes, but you were a year senior to me. Oh, I used to be terribly frightened of you in those days.

Hedda: Frightened of me?

Mrs. Elvsted: Yes, terribly frightened. Whenever you met me on the staircase you used to pull my hair.

Hedda: No, did I?

Mrs. Elvsted: Yes. And once you said you’d burn it all off.”
(2492)

Although Hedda plays it off as a joke, her real intent put a fear in the young woman those years couldn’t forget.

When the two meet some years later, Hedda connives to draw the truth out of Mrs. Elvsted about her purpose in returning to town. She doesn’t ask out of pure interest in her well being, but so she can use what she finds out to her full advantage. This comes to backfire on Mrs. Elvsted when Loevborg makes his presence known to both women. Hedda uses the situation from the morning when Mrs. Elvsted came to their house in a panic to cause suspicion between the two. Mrs. Elvsted realizes what Hedda’s about to do and cries out, “Oh, my God, my God, Hedda, what are you saying? What are you doing?” (2511). Needless to say, Loevborg retaliates with frustration and anger about the lack of trust and tips a couple of glasses of punch back.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Elvsted questions Hedda, “Hedda, Hedda! Why did you want this to happen?” Hedda in almost a sarcastic voice says, “I—want it? Are you mad?” (2514). These examples prove that Hedda felt a bit of jealousy toward the lovely, young Mrs. Elvsted who did everything she couldn’t. Mrs. Elvsted left her husband for love and scandal didn’t matter to her. We

find out that Hedda, jealous of Mrs. Elvsted’s hair, would also be jealous of her looks, age, situation and strength, so we can see in order to get one step above her, Hedda targets another character to cruelly use—the young revolutionary writer, Loevborg.

In Act I, we learn slowly how Loevborg and Mrs. Elvsted’s relationship forms over the writing of his new and brilliant piece. We also find out that he and Hedda had former relations as well. Hedda knew the reputation he previously held and she makes sure to sow those seeds of doubt back into his mind by influencing him to drink down a couple cups of punch as she plays with his mind in the only way she could. She sways him to attend the party with her husband and Judge Brack knowing very well that something bad could happen. Indeed, we see that something bad does happen. In Loevborg’s drunken manner, he loses his “child,” the only thing capable of bringing him some redemption among society. After losing it, Hedda finds him and we encounter one of her most demonic acts associated with this play. In Act III they hold a correspondence:

“Hedda: Wait. I want to give you a souvenir to take with you.

Loevborg: This? Is this the souvenir?

Hedda: Here! Use it now!

Loevborg: Thank you.

Hedda: Do it beautifully, Eliert Loevborg. Only promise me that!” (2527)

Loevborg takes her advice and we find in later passages that he commits suicide. Hedda plays her part in killing the young man, and the evidence of the pistol points straight at her. She helps commit a sin, that at the time, she herself cannot perform. Although she assists in

a horrible deed, we gain something more about her character and witness the reversal of power to all the forces shaping Hedda.

The evil power controlling Hedda plays a large part in her malicious actions and therefore makes us wonder what Ibsen uses as other forces to shape her character into someone tragic. Hedda is a product of the patriarchal society she grew up in. We learn that her father received respect from the community around them and with respect comes status. Hedda reveals to us the typical want of wealth and the importance of status for she desires the luxuries of money and enjoys the ability to use power; a power that avoids any type threat of scandal. She struggles with the desire to obtain freedom to do as she pleases without being looked down upon and keeping the prestige of her father's name scandal free. These combine to form a Hedda who is bored with a life which traps her. In several instances, we see Hedda's boredom portrayed through conversation. In Act I, one such discussion occurs when Hedda expresses her enthusiasm for her husband to join a duel. It states as follows:

Hedda: How exciting, Tesman. It'll be a kind of duel, by Jove.

Tesman: My dear Hedda, how can you take it so lightly?

Hedda: I'm not. I can't wait to see who's going to win." (2498)

Numerous times she explains her boredom by describing certain accounts of her and her husband's honeymoon and new life. She clearly describes the distaste of living with the same person every morning, noon and...night, and isn't afraid to clue to her husband about the matter.

However, in the end, boredom proves the least of her concerns, and we see a Hedda trapped by society. Toward the end of the play, after the death of Loevborg and the transition of power to Judge Brack, Hedda and we realize he now holds the key to her future after the discovery of her pistol in Loevborg's possession and this kills her more than any materialistic thing could. She shows her disgust by saying, "Nevertheless, I'm in your power. Dependent on your will, and your demands. Not free. Still not free! No. I couldn't bear that. No" (2537). Hedda's will is broken and now she sees she can't escape the situation so she does the only thing fathomable given her character and shoots herself. We could argue that this is the easy way out and it would take a stronger individual to remain alive. However, given the circumstances, Ibsen makes sure we realize what's at stake in the fact that she would still be a prisoner. It is her way of escaping that patriarchal pressure of society to conform and subject herself in this condition. Hedda's character is far more advanced for the norms of society during that time. She longs for something more than marriage and a happy home that many women such as Mrs. Elvsted would be happy with. Hedda desires the power and right to choose that comes with status and in a way demands she receives that respect even as a woman. Ibsen uses her to pave the way in exposing the patriarchal society and confronting it with any means possible.

In order to challenge the demands of a patriarchal society, Ibsen uses Hedda in a controversial light to make us realize what happens to individuals shaped by such a harsh restrictions. When people fight for a cause, we tend to desire someone to be

the hero and someone must stand up to be the good guy, but when the hero isn't good, how can we relate? Ibsen uses the exact opposite scenario to show us that Hedda is so influential because she doesn't fit the normal revolutionary woman. He uses her in a bad light to prove that change doesn't always happen with the good guy winning, but instead a horrid character can speak just as loudly or more so. Hedda not only makes us view and question her character differently, but we also question the forces creating her to be that way. We value her as a character because she uses her actions in the only ways the situation will allow, and, in turn, the difference Hedda makes leave us with a feeling of discontent with the societal influences. Ibsen's play is considered a tragedy because we do feel sorry for Hedda's trapped character and the means in which she has to escape it. We realize her cruelty isn't caused because she is ultimately evil, but the lack of freedom she so longs for from a patriarchal society proves the true evil.

Ibsen makes us look at Hedda's character to realize that sometimes in order to see the final good, we must travel through the forms of evil. Although her character may be less than desirable, Ibsen uses that to explain why she had to act out against the forces shaping her. She didn't act out in spite, but in the hope that some day women of her same state would never be put in an escapable position.

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Taking Flight II
Painting
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