

Musings of Brescia

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The Lette

By Maria Miltenburg

My po table compute doesn't ecognize the lette .
It neve evels itself.
Eve y othe lette is ecognized,
Eve y single one -- except .
That i itates me ve y much
Because a lot of wo ds equi e the lette to be eal wo ds, and my po table compute doesn't
ecognize it.
I w ite a sto y, poem, essay, newspape a ticle, dia y,
And half the wo ds a e w ong
Because the lette doesn't appea .
I then hand the piece in to my teache , and he o she gives it back
Wonde ing if I can spell o not.
My ambition is to be an edito -- I w ite on the side, and I am a *supe b* spelle .
It's not my fault my po table compute doesn't ecognize the lette .
I can't even spell my fi st o last name anymo e,
Because the e's an in both names.

Love and Loss

By Shawnee Hayward

Albert de Guyenne looked at his pocket watch with slight annoyance, tapped the face briefly with his finger, and then held the watch up to his ear. The ticks beyond the casing were slower than he was used to. He muttered a curse, and his wife gave him a stern glare. Their carriage rattled along the dirt road north towards the village of Saint-Valentin. Nicolas rested against his mother's side, breathing slowly in hopes of calming his churning stomach. Henry kept trying to look out the uncovered window only to have his father pull him back into his seat.

"How much farther is it Father?" asked Henry after the eighth time he had been made to sit. The Grand Duke sighed and ruffled his eldest son's blond hair with a chuckle.

"Far enough for you to stop asking, my son! We will arrive soon, and then you and your brother can stretch your legs." Henry suddenly bolted to the window and stretched his arm out, waving towards an oncoming horse that was moving in a steady trot. Atop the grey mare was Antoine who had his hair tied back behind his head, and was looking rather nervous. Clovis rode alongside him on his chestnut stallion.

"How goes it, Albert? Hasn't the old woman driven you to ride up front with Pierre yet?" Clovis called with a somewhat mocking smile. Nicole gnawed on her bottom lip, cheeks flushing in a fury, but she said nothing. Albert shook his head and leaned forward to shout out over his son's head.

"No Clovis, you bloody Picard! I haven't left yet, but I will have to if your antics continue."

The village came into view shortly after their little exchange and Clovis had been joined by Carissa and Gaston, who rode in on a white mare. The carriage rolled to a halt, and the boys bounded from it like young frogs. Nicole descended from the vehicle, sniffed at their behavior, and wrapped her cloak firmly about her shoulders to combat the mid-February chill. The sole reason they had stopped in this small village had been for the sake of Clovis and Carissa, who had insisted on renewing their marriage vows here on this day, the fourteenth. Around them, youths and lovers scrambled to participate in the *loterie d'amour*. People crossed the road to

houses on the other side, shouting for their neighbor to partner with them for the day. Several men rejected the partners they had picked, and wandered off to find someone they preferred. Some couples, having found their match, went off to the celebrations. The scorned women built a large bonfire in which to throw the images of the men whom had hurt them.

"So barbaric," Nicole hissed to Albert as the angry women, with the fire burning bright behind them, cursed and swore at the men who passed by. Albert looked to the sky as if searching for divine guidance before offering Nicole his arm.

Carissa, Gaston, and Antoine had dismounted, but Clovis had yet to; he waited until Nicole and Albert had drawn closer before he leapt off his horse and landed in a mud patch, dirtying his boots and splattering some on the hem of Nicole's full green skirt. Nicole lost her noble composure and drew her closed fan from her sleeve, striking Clovis's shoulder furiously and shattering the delicate accessory. Clovis only laughed and bowed incredibly low, flourishing his hat comically and apologizing.

"I hope you can forgive me, dearest Madame," said Clovis, his voice heavy with sarcasm.

"Rogue! If only you had paid as much attention to your daughter as you do to me, maybe she would still be alive!" Nicole said scathingly. Clovis abruptly stopped laughing and his whole expression twisted into a mix of anger and grief before he turned away. He grabbed at Carissa's arm and led her off towards the church, barreling through the people and leaving everyone else behind. Albert glared at Nicole.

"That was uncalled for Madame, and I demand that you apologize to Clovis as soon as they have finished their business," he ordered imperiously, squeezing her elbow slightly. Nicole wrenched her arm away, and narrowed her eyes at the Grand Duke.

"If you think I am going to apologize to that false Count, then, Monseigneur, you are quite mad." Albert turned away from his wife and watched Henry, Nicolas, and Antoine pretending to sword fight a short distance away. Gaston was crouched at the base of a nearby tree, picking at something. Nicole left Albert, moving towards the church, and he stood in the field with only his thoughts for company that turned towards the previous summer, 1593.

The main doors of the château flew open with a crash as Clovis rushed in, carrying a bundle in his arms. Albert was standing with a foot on the stairs, frozen in shock.

“Clovis, what is the matter?” he demanded, seeing his friend’s face colored in a sickly shade of grey.

“Get a doctor Albert,” said Clovis in a trembling voice that steadily grew louder with every word, “get a surgeon, an apothecary, anyone that can save Renée!”

Albert called a servant to fetch his own doctor. Antoine and Gaston arrived shortly after their father had bounded up the stairs. The boys were gasping for air, hair sticking to their foreheads. Albert rounded on them with wide eyes, putting a hand on each of their shoulders.

“Boys, if you can do so, please tell me what happened.”

Gaston refused to look up, finding the cracks in the Grand Duke’s leather boots more interesting. Antoine was pale as a sheet. He opened to speak, but no sound came out save for a weak gasp of air. Albert’s eyes narrowed and he tilted Gaston’s chin up to meet the blue eyes of the boy.

“Gaston, what happened?”

Gaston shook his head in defeat. His eyes shifted to look somewhere past the Grand Duke’s ear.

“I tried to tell him, Monseigneur, but he would not listen,” said the boy with a slight tremor. “She’s dead. The horse killed her when it kicked.”

The doctor arrived at that moment and Albert was forced to leave the boys and take the waiting man upstairs. Once there, the doctor took less than a minute to declare Renée dead.

Once the shock had passed and the funeral was completed, Clovis had ordered his family to pack their belongings. When Albert tried to reason with him, nothing could be said to change the Count’s mind. Clovis moved his family to the village of Mont-de-Marsan, which was about a day’s ride from Bordeaux. Clovis became almost like a recluse. It had taken his entire prowess to convince Clovis to leave his new home, and his smithy, to take some time away.

Albert took a breath to clear his head and called to his sons to return to the carriage. He turned to see Clovis and Carissa exiting the church with Nicole shortly behind them. Both families were to stay the night in the village at the local inn, enjoy the feast to celebrate Saint Valentine. They would continue on to Chartres in the morning in order to be present at the coronation of the Protestant leader King Henry of Navarre as King Henry IV of France in the coming week.

Just In Time

By Paula Carr

“You are one of those ‘Just in Case’ kind of people.”

“What the heck does that mean?” I asked her, and she said it meant the opposite of a ‘Just in Time’ kind of person. “Which are you?” I wondered out loud and immediately wished I hadn’t.

“Oh, I’m a ‘Just in Time’ kind of gal,” she said with that smirk on her face. Why do I even try to be friends with her? She always makes me feel like a fool. Why do I meet her every Friday after work for coffee? Every Friday night I feel like a beat up piece of crap.

“How do you know what kind of person I am? I might be a closet ‘Just in Time kind of person’ and you don’t know it,” I tried to lighten things up a bit.

“Oh, I’ll bet you have an umbrella in the bottom of that huge purse you carry all the time.” She eyed my purse with disgust.

“So what if I do? What if it rains? You’ll be the first one to get under my umbrella because there is no way you have one in that little change purse you carry,” I was not going to let her win this one.

“You carry that umbrella ‘Just in Case’, and I only carry one if it is raining. See the difference? It’s the way you are. You carry way too much baggage. It might even be the reason you have a weight problem.”

That did it. How could anyone be so mean? I left.

I stared at the door of my apartment when I got home. The note I left for the mailman was still stuck on the mailbox. “*I am expecting a parcel. If it arrives, please put it in the plastic bag, inside the box, in case it rains.*” I opened the door, reached over, grabbed the note off the box, and slammed the door. Could she be right? Am I a boring ‘Just in Case’ kind of person?

When I opened the refrigerator to get a drink, I noticed the rows of pickles and mustards and three kinds of ‘Just in Case’ juices. I sat at the kitchen table and glared at my cupboards full

of dishes, pots, pans, and at least fifty cookbooks, 'Just in Case'. 'Just in Case' what?" I screamed. In case he comes back to me? In case I meet someone new? In case I ever find someone to love and cook for again?

I reached for a hanger to hang up my coat. What for? In case someone drops by? In case someone might think I was a less than perfect housekeeper? I was more pathetic than I thought.

Wandering through the apartment, I realized I was a 'Just in Case' kind of person. The bed. Oh the bed. I had a king sized bed. Me, alone, in a king sized bed, for what? 'Just in Case', that's why. 'Just in Case'.

My closet was full of three sizes of clothes. One size fit me, then there was one size smaller, and one size larger. That's when I lost it. I grabbed an extra large plastic bag. Of course there were small, medium, and large to choose from. I chose the extra large plastic bag, and started to throw out the small and large sized clothes. I kept holding dresses, shirts and skirts up to me. Maybe someday I would need these clothes. Why, why? They are already out of style, and they never really looked that good. They are all safe clothes; the colours go with everything, and the style is as plain as unbuttered toast. One jacket can go with any skirt, and any shirt can go with all the pants. When did this happen to me? Am I this way for a reason? Maybe I better be careful. What if tomorrow I change my mind and want to be a 'Just in Case' kind of person again?

I sat on the floor of my bedroom sorting shoes. I have had some for ten years and never wore them. Why? Because I might need them 'Just in Case'.

It was after midnight when I finished loading the car. The Good Will was the first stop early in the morning, then the second stop was the park for a run. The rain couldn't stop me. Shopping works in all kinds of weather too. I bought clothes in my favourite colors and got my hair cut in the style I've always wanted but was too afraid to try. It was late and I was hungry, so I stopped at the neighbourhood bar for something to eat just in time for the evening hockey game. The place was packed so I looked around for a place to sit. Arriving anywhere without a reservation was not my style. When a man offered to share his booth with me I hesitated: I couldn't just sit down with a total stranger. Could I? I did.

He was new in town but the movers wouldn't arrive until tomorrow. He just thought he'd drive around his new neighbourhood and see how it looked at night. We talked until the game was over and noticed the bar was clearing out.

I smiled when I arrived home and threw the parcels on the bed. I decided I'd keep my king sized bed.