

the Liberator

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LIBERAL ARTS COUNCIL
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS IN AUSTIN

[about](#) / [competitions](#) / [academic](#) / [political](#) / [student life](#) / [art & lifestyle](#) / [opinion](#)

- LEGISLATION
- EVENT COVERAGE
- PRINT ISSUES
- SPRING 2016 WRITING COMPETITION

FOR A MOMENT

April 22, 2016 · by The Liberator Magazine · in Spring 2016 Writing Competition, Uncategorized. ·

PRINT ISSUES

- FALL 2015



~~ "The Language Issue" ~~

CATEGORIES

- Academic
- Art & Lifestyle
- Political
- Staff Writers
 - Andy Cerecero
 - Annyston Pennington
 - Cole F Watson
 - Cynthia Turner
 - Dylan Preston
 - Elizabeth Teare
 - Frances Molina
 - JoJo Phillips
 - Julian Munoz Villarreal

This piece was selected as a finalist for our Nonfiction Writing Competition, Spring 2016.

Written by: **Sarah Chen (Po-Yun Chen)**

For a Moment

It was after almost an entire week of holding my breath every time I stepped into that classroom, after I had convinced myself that my teacher was only *kidding*, of course she was, who would actually seriously suggest something that had nothing to do with the curriculum and that we probably didn't have time for and that—

“So,” Mrs. Smith said, her hand on a stack of paper. “We have some time left, and Sarah wrote a short story. I thought it would be fun to read it as a class.”

Dear God, I thought, I must be a masochist. There was no other explanation for ever wanting to be in this situation, all eyes on me in curiosity or skepticism or whatever it was in their eyes while I was

APRIL 2016

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
« Mar				May »		

- o Kristi Kamesch trying to hide behind my hands.
- o Madeleine Kenney —
- o Mubarrat Choudhury I can't remember much of my reasons for making time in the midst of demanding classes and exhausting band practice and the crushing weight of my studies to write Shakespearean fanfiction, but one thing I can never let go is that it was all supposed to be a joke. We were reading *Othello* for English; Iago was a fascinating character. Some essay or assignment or *something* talked about how ambiguous Iago's motivations in the play were, and then Priyanka or Simran or *someone* laughingly suggested that maybe Iago was actually in love with Othello—*so he wasn't mad that Othello slept with his wife, he's mad that Othello didn't sleep with him*—
- o Olivia Mizell
- o Samantha Bolf
- o Sarah Lynn Neal
- o William Moessinger
- o Student Life
- o Uncategorized
- o Voices of Liberal Arts
 - o Event Coverage
 - o Guest Articles
 - o Spring 2016 Writing Competition
 - o Opinion
 - o Print Issues
 - o The Language Issue

It was supposed to be a joke, but Priyanka turned to me and said *Hey, you should write this*, and I agreed because it was what I did, and within hours I was staring red-eyed at the first draft and wondering how some throwaway comment in class discussion had come to this. I didn't even start this project for myself, and now it held a tight, trembling place in my heart.

It was supposed to be a joke, but I suppose if you could foresee what would suddenly become precious to you, life would be much easier.

Part of being a writer, I think, is the constant ache of dissatisfaction. The wording could've been more poignant the characterization could've been more nuanced the metaphors could've been more subtle the story could've been better better *better—why didn't I think of this why didn't I develop this theme why didn't I plant more details*—

ARCHIVES

- o May 2016
- o April 2016
- o March 2016
- o February 2016
- o January 2016
- o December 2015
- o November 2015
- o October 2015

I had only just written the story; I finished editing not a week ago. But when I looked at the copy, I cringed immediately.

Did I actually use the term "fair damsel"?

"I can't believe you actually did it." Priyanka laughed, flipping her copy over, then back again. "You should do this for all the books we read in class."

"We should reenact this!" Simran shouted. Our class had reenacted several scenes from our readings, and suddenly my work seemed to

have reached some miraculous status, seemed to have become sacred. "Well, okay," she conceded. "Maybe just one scene."

Emily grinned. "I'm so excited."

"Okay," I said. "Okay."

—

We don't get to choose the legacy we leave behind. If given the choice, I would have wanted to be remembered by my kindness and compassion, or maybe my academic achievements, or perhaps my positive influence on my classmates and underclassmen.

Perhaps it is better, after all, that we let others decide.

"This is Sarah," my classmate said, gesturing to me. "She's the one I told you about, the one who wrote *Othello* fanfiction."

"Yeah, I read your story," a senior, one of the editors of the literary magazine, said. "I wish we could put your entire story in, even if it takes up half the magazine."

"I still brag to my friends about you," my friend said. "I tell them about that Shakespeare story you wrote. Weren't you going to write more?"

Andy Warhol said that everyone gets fifteen minutes of fame; perhaps I have used up my time on this. But it's not terrible, I think, being forever this literary figure that people hesitate to take seriously.

At the very least, I can live knowing that I once made people laugh.

—

People ask me why I write. I always impulsively want to ask them why they breathe, but of course that would be rude.

"It's a matter of pride," I might say, trying to sound simultaneously pretentious and vague to discourage them from asking for clarification. "I can't give up something I've put so much effort into."

Or perhaps, if I felt like indulging: "I won some competitions as a kid and I just kind of stuck with it."

But the truth was simple. Because we all sat in a circle, our desks awkwardly angled, and Mrs. Smith asked with a smile if anyone would like to volunteer, and this class of juniors and seniors who could be napping or studying or doing homework or anything, really, raised their hands and answered.

And they chuckled when they recognized my sarcasm, they held their breath at the climax, they tried to (but didn't) muffle their giggles at the innuendos, and their excitement and anticipation, their breathless grins and wide-eyed surprise, was worth all the anxiety, all the worry, the frustrations over each scene, the struggle over each word. For a moment I forgot the hollow ache of *I want more I want more I want more* and simply basked in the fact that these people enjoyed something I created, these people appreciated a piece of my heart. For a moment my story was already good enough; for a moment my story mattered.

“Oh my God,” Simran gasped, because somehow out of all the scenes she picked the one thick with sexual tension. There were tears of laughter in her eyes; she had practically collapsed on a desk. “Oh my God, this is so great, I can't breathe—”

And God knows I would do it all again and again and again, just to feel that simple joy.

Share this:



Loading...

[← Testing the Limitless](#)

[On Faith →](#)

One response to “For a Moment”



[brokenseeds](#) July 11, 2016 at 12:58 pm · [Reply](#) →

Reblogged this on [GreenAnkhWorks](#).

Like

Leave a Reply



Email (required)

(Address never made public)

Name (required)

Website

Notify me of new comments via email.

Notify me of new posts via email.