

Writing Samples by Euboea Brown

Short Stories

“Federal Government”

Short story | written 2008 | edited 2017

Somewhere above Jenkins' head, a blue hue light flickered on and off.

Jenkins scoffed to himself, "Another Friday night and nothing to do but fool around on the Internet." He kicked at an empty noodle package on the floor then plopped down into an inflatable sofa by the window. He watched an animated crowd of orange, yellow, and white cross the green, grassy field toward the stadium in the distance. The next door neighbors giggled as one of the guys leaned deeply over the window sill to paint the letters of the dorm name, right below the window, in the school's colors. He wondered, "How can this be the excitement of college?"

Jenkins had been at college for over a year and managed to get his own dorm room for the second semester in a row. He felt very lucky, plus, it was the first real break from his mom's constant want to take care of him. She would ask if he needed anything. His "no" reply meant I'll-bring-it-to-you-anyway.

This was a particularly boring evening. There was a football game at the stadium. With him having no interest in sports and everyone else having school spirit, Jenkins was left to mope in solitude feeling bound to his room.

He thought, "I don't want to go to the gym or eat anything. Hm. Everything shuts down on game day."

His cellular phone rings. He groans at the thought of formulating conversation with whoever was on the other line. He glanced at the screen. "Mom, of course," then tossed the phone onto his bed.

The call went to voicemail with a loud *CHIME*.

"*MOO, MOO,*" sounded from the instant message software on his laptop computer. "I wonder who that is," Jenkins thought. He eased out of the sofa and crossed the room towards his laptop. "I bet it's Sonya," he thought with excitement, and sat down at the desk.

Sonya questioned, "What are you doing, Little Bro?"

"Drugs, obviously," he teased her. Jenkins always enjoyed imaginative conversations with Sonya. "And then the Federal Government comes in to arrest me, right? LOL."

Playfully, she replied, "I'll tell! ILL TELL!"

"No need to. I've already told them. They want to join me before convicting me," Jenkins joked.

There was a knock at his dorm door. Jenkins got up to answer. He looked through the peephole to an unusual scene. The lights were dimmed in the hallway. There was a thin envelope leaning on the wall across from his door with "JENKINS" in bold large font written on it. Jenkins stiffened. He was not expecting anything. Besides, he had to go to the University Center Post Office to pick up any type of mail. Jenkins had always been hesitant to do things because he absolutely disliked being scared. His breath shortened and quickened. He put his hand to his chest feeling the rapid, pounding heart palpitations. He took slow steps back away from the door, and paused a moment with a fear-stricken stare. With a hard swallow, Jenkins shook his head, sighed audibly, then retreated back to his laptop. He quickly typed, "Or are they reading what I'm writing now?!"

Sonya kidded, "Hi, Federal Government. LOL! Can you find me by my IP address just from typing your name?"

Jokingly convinced, "I bet they are listening. They have some sorta database that picks up on any texted words that relate to them."

She inquired, "Did you get the package I sent you?"

"Yes, I just got it." Jenkins thought, "That's weird." Relieved, he replied, "Someone delivered it to me so now I don't have to walk all the way to the University Center. I'll go get it. BRB." Jenkins bravely returned to the dorm door, and hesitantly looked through the peephole once more to check for

any evidence of unwanted surprise. Nothing had changed. He took several deep breaths, unlocked the door, and slowly opened it.

On screen, Sonya continued, "Federal Government! Federal Government! Federal Government! LOL! I'll tell them that you're practicing your SAXOPHONE at CLOUDTON UNIVERSITY and that you NEED DRUGS for your cold. Then I'll send an UNMARKED PACKAGE to your DORM so they'll know exactly where you are! A package CONTAINING operating INSTRUCTIONS on how to CRACK their CODES and steal IDENTITIES! LOL."

Jenkins was not there to receive her messages.

"Oh, BTW! I hope they're not broken. It's those cookies you like. I sent 2 boxes wrapped in a t-shirt to try to save them. So it's a pretty hefty sized box. Good thing I love you because that it was expensive to ship...."

The hallway was filled with a haze and the perfumed air was moist. He thought, "Man, they're really puffing that dragon!" A big grin appeared on his face as he picked up the thin envelope, shook it, looked all about it, and then brought it inside. The door locked automatically once closed.

Jenkins returned to his laptop to see what messages he had missed.

"...And then David and I went to the city carnival last night for my birthday. He won me a cute little stuffed turtle!" Jenkins rolled his eyes as he sat down at the desk. Sonya rambled on about her adventures with her boyfriend, David. It only reminded him of his dull bachelor life, and, therefore, was not interested ignored all of her previous message.

He eagerly opened the sealed envelope. It was odd that Sonya did not put any address labels on it. The fleeting thought of how it made it to him soon passed. A smaller postcard-sized envelope and a golden Cloudton University silver coin, the size of a half dollar, were enclosed. The coin had writing on both sides: "Cloudton University" and "We love WATCHING YOU grow". Jenkins laughed to himself, "That's not the slogan of the school. Why would Sonya send me this?" In disregard, he threw the coin like a small basketball across the room at the trash basket. It PINKED on rim, rolled around on its edge until it finally landed flat with the slogan side facing up. The blue hue light flickered on then off near a ceiling corner of the room.

A two-fold card was inside the smaller envelope. In plain black-and-white type: "You've been working hard at school. I'm checking up on you." It was not signed by Sonya. He looked a bit closer at the picture on the front of the card. It was a photograph of his dorm as he recognized the name of his hall on the building. He laughed at the guy hanging out of the window with a paintbrush in hand. It somehow seemed familiar. He flipped back to the text then the photo. The photo was an inch from his eyes. GASP. Jenkins' eyes widened. He stumbled out of his seat and threw the card down like it was covered in a thousand tiny ants. At the window, he dropped the blinds and frantically ran his hand down it to close out all light.

The room darkened quickly except laptop's screen and the unnoticed blue hue light flickering in a new corner of the room. Jenkins snatched the laptop off the desk and buried himself in the comforter on his bed, far away from the sketchy mail. The card stood perfectly upright with the photo facing Jenkins.

Jenkins peered out at the card as he plucked loudly on the keyboard to Sonya, "If you're here, you had better tell me!"

"I'm not there. I have to work all week, duh," as if it were a dumb question.

Trembling slightly, he retorts, "Why would you send me this?! You know I don't like being scared!"

"What are you talking about? You must've walked away from the computer. Go back and read what I sent you and stop freaking out on me. Nature calls. BRB."

Without hesitation, Jenkins quickly scrolled through what seemed like 2 pages of David adventures until he found the words "Federal Government". He read. He thought, "A hefty sized box? What? Sonya!" Then type, "This is NOT funny!"

She didn't respond. Jenkins shot up and paced with the items in hand. He snatched up the coin, shoved it with the card back into the envelope, and then tossed it on his bed.

She returned, "What's not funny?"

"I didn't get *your* package," he nervously typed.

"Well, what was at your door?"

"It was a freaking envelope with my name on it! I thought maybe you were goofing around and were really here."

"You know I'd call you! You're too far away for me to just show up, Jenkins. So what was it?" Sonya was a little more concerned.

Now hysteric, "A coin and card. My picture is on this card."

Jenkins' computer softly WHOOSHED like an airplane and startled him. A new e-mail appeared. It came from "Son ya" with a photo attachments. He opened them. There were several snapshots of him currently in his room, at his computer, and by the window. Jenkins jumped back from the desk. Shaking intensely now, he grabbed his phone and dialed Sonya.

Sonya answered calmly, "So why are you freaking out?"

His voice barely broke through his gasps of breath, He whispered in agitation watching his every corner, "If-if-if this is one-one of your pr-pr-pranks, S-Sonya, you win! This is-is-s s NOT funny."

Nonchalant, "Well, *you* sound funny. I already told you I'm not there and I'm not playing a prank on you, Jenkins."

He walked over to his bed and stared out the window. "You just sent me a freakin' e-mail with pictures of me in my room right now! I'm wearing the same clothes, Sonya." He began pacing, "I don't like this. I don't like this. I don't like this..."

She paused. "Okay, let's calmly figure this out. Tell me *exactly* what happened when you first heard the knock at your door."

There was a knock at the door. Jenkins froze.

Alarmed, she whispered "*Was that a knock?*"

"*Sh sh sh sh sh! Don't say anything,*" he whispered his plea. Jenkins scrambled inside the open closet, and peered out at the door. Silence lapsed. He thought, "Go away. Go away. Go away."

"*Jenkins--,*"

"*Wait,*" he pleaded.

There was another knock. He jumped and knocked his head into empty hangers. He held his breath and remained motionless in the closet.

"Hey, Jenkins," a male voice called out.

Sonya begged, "*Jenkins, who's at the door?*"

Jenkins let out a long, deep sigh. "*It's my R.A., Dan.*"

"*Oh. Good.*"

"Jenkins?" Dan called louder.

"*Let me go see what's up. I'm setting you down.*" He stepped out of the closet and tossed the phone on the bed. Jenkins wiped the moisture off his face. He looked through the peephole. Dan stood there rubbing the back of his neck in the hazy, dimly lit hallway.

Jenkins unlocked the door, and opened it with a friendly voice, "Hey Da---"

Interrupted, "Mr. Hollow, I'm with the F.B.I." He flashed shiny badge.

A faint blue glow flickered in the now haze-filled, empty dorm room.

Sonya's voice came from the bed, "Jenkins? Hello? Did you forget about me? Jenkins?" The phone clicked and a dial tone droned in the dark room.

The Cloudton University coin fell out of the envelope. It CLINKED to the floor, rolled on around on edge until it lay flat with the slogan side face up.

“Euboea's Inferno”

Short story | written 2002 | edited 2017

Welcome all souls who are not worthy of The Higher Being's glory! You have arrived here because The Higher Being does not see you fit enough to live amongst her Golden people in Golden Reality. Therefore, you must suffer for all eternity in this Inferno. Do not relax. Do not get comfy, for, where you are headed is not very pleasant.

As your demonic guide, Wrahshfah, I will show you no mercy as will no other demon here. I will always laugh at your presence as we venture through each level until your destination, where I will bid you repeated suffering. In the Inferno, there are three levels: red, gray, and black. From my flaming control cloud, I will watch you plunge helplessly through the dark, foul mist until you land at your colored destination. Your torment begins... with a shove.

And, going down...

At each level, as a continuous reminder of the missed opportunity of life as a Golden, are the chambers in the shape of a triangle with its molten contents flowing counter-clockwise, as yet another reminder of being against The Higher Being. Do not be alarmed when you're knocked unconscious from the solid ice chunks pelted at you by those playful demons. They insist on making your eternity with them as miserable as possible. And they will certainly step up their aim if you're not in enough pain.

Ah, let's see. Oh. You're not Level Red. I believe we will have to ride this one out. I'll watch as you plunge helplessly through this sulfuric surrounding. Notice the temperature change from a stale, clammy stench to dry ice cold. Look how the flesh has cracked! It's perfectly common and uncomfortable. Your brittle, worrisome expression only pleases me. Once we land in the triangular pit of slushy, yellow bile with golf ball size eyeballs, the crisp, frigid air will feel more like a reoccurring nightmare. Luckily, you'll never awaken from it. Ha!

Those eyes are alive and can see you very clearly. You have an admirer; that one winked at you. These eyes are constantly searching for their owners. Those poor souls go blind because their eyes dangle right out of their sockets and drop off. Are you numb yet? Good. The empty body capsules frantically wander to every point of the chamber trying to recover their sight lost with millions of other unclaimed eyeballs.

Souls at this level are those who were not given the opportunity to see and know the power of The Higher Being. They came before Her time so are decidedly blind to the greatest Her Highness brought to the world. But you won't have to worry about that, will you? Ha ha-ha! This reeking chamber has turned so cold the lost sights are sticking to the body of the souls, and you! Well it's no wonder they can't find their way. Aren't you glad you're not here, or are you? Hm-hm-hmm. It's a never-ending cycle for them.

Alas, going down...

Oh! The stench is vile. Wonderful. Level Gray is far more unsettling than Red, especially with our landing. Oh-ho! Did you break your leg on that jagged boulder? Hm. 'Tis only a minor bruise. De-mons! *CLAP, CLAP*. He's not in enough pain! Oh, you're bleeding. Much better. Obligated.

The oddly sharpened rocks are also reminders of the way life should have been chosen up in Golden Reality. Here, the souls deny The Higher Being's existence, falsify Her to others, pledge allegiance to other Higher powers, misuse the Golden Rules, or disgrace themselves, like prostitutes, drug abusers, and children fondlers, find themselves here. Yes, even those who dishonor their families, thieves, or don't celebrate Her Highness' birthday, will find themselves loving this level. In this three-sided, stone chamber, one will spend all of eternity bouncing and slamming in protruding corners. Class status no longer exists here. Celebrity artists, political, and religious figures gone awry all reside together.

The uncompromising warmth you're feeling now comes from that gray, liquid river, comprised of molten rock and delightfully charred bodies. The river collects the parts that break off when the body is

totally mutilated after bashing into the pointed boulders. Oooh! Here comes the best part! That rumbling? Yes, it's the volcanic eruption of disintegrated souls! It shoots out, flows down, and repeats itself again and again and again.

Onward. Downward...

Finally. Oh, this wait has be agonizing. But not as it will be for you. We have arrived at the most dreadful level of them all. Oh, pus pockets! You've arrive here in one piece. De-mons! *CLAP, CLAP*. See that our distinguished, permanent resident receives a wholesome, and well-deserved, welcome to...Level Black. Muahahahahaha!

This is your new home, in the depths of the heartless. You're one of the unfortunate souls to reach this final level of the inferno. It may seem like a pleasant place due to the more suitable temperature and tolerable scents. Ha! Do not get too relaxed. At any given time, the rocky flooring will transform into a marsh pool of lukewarm bile-soaked guts, cracked-jagged bones, blood-slickened body parts, and fairly thick globs of brain matter infested with tapeworms. Oh, yes, you did indeed bring this upon yourself, you fool.

At this chamber's center, chained unloving to the three walls is the famous Looseh-her, also known as The Dammed. He was kicked out of Golden Reality for being a nonconformist. Look how the masticated bodies foam out of his mouth and pores. This is what formed the chamber walls, you know. I'm sure he'll taste you soon enough. Come. He's not the only one here.

Joining him are those who took lives or oppressed others, such souls include bombers, cannibals, poachers, and those who've poured gasoline on ant hills. It's been a long journey down, and it'll be the last. We've prepared an everlasting feast for your hearty appetite. Mmm-mmm-mmm. At Level Black, souls are driven with the hunger and thirst for blood and flesh. As they once battled in Golden Reality, they shall battle beneath it. Now it's your turn to quench your thirst with a drink from the blood you'll swim in, and fight for the juiciest, spoiled legs in the pit. Not only will you feed off the already severed limbs, but you are condemned to eat out the heart of another by ravenously ripping a poor soul to shreds. Since the heart was what you chose to neglect, it so becomes the one thing you crave to obtain.

And this, my loveless fool, is where we forever depart. You're just the right spice to keep the flames here alive. May pieces be of you.

Going up...

Prompt: College class writing assignment to create one's own "inferno" like Dante.