


Nausea

There is a demon in my guts, twisting my intestines around his pitchfork.
Glistening globs of yellow mucous coagulate into mountains of indigestion.
Half digested sausage bits swim in an ocean of pepto bismo and bile.
My torso is squeezed under the weight of a semi-truck loaded with water balloons full of stomach acid.
Chunks. Bits. Fluids.

My life sucks.

Nemesis

The unmarked white paper lies before me as I try to think of what to write,
My pen in hand, so far unused, taps out a steady rhythm against the table top;
One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four.
I've heard the writer's nemesis is the blank page.
I've never known it to be more true than at this moment.
Where are the dreams I had that kept me up last night?
Tossing and turning in my sheets, they seemed such great ideas.
Now, when it's time to make them real, I ask myself,
What was I thinking?
I set the pen down, stretch, get up and get a drink.
I need to think. I need inspiration.
Hmm...I wonder who's on Facebook.


Format: ABDCE

I was walking down the hall when it happened. The man started chasing me from behind. One look at him had me scared for my life. He was much taller than me, with broad shoulders, tattoos, and a cut-off leather jacket that proved to me he was trouble. I twisted through the Computer Science building and ran up the stairs as fast as I could, but he was gaining ground on me.

I can't imagine why this guy was after me. It seemed like my whole life I had been running from guys like this. Ever since I moved to this college town I thought things would settle down a little more. I live a fast-paced life without any straps. I guess its something I have to deal with for the rest of my life.

I quickly found an empty room after I made a sharp left turn to avoid the man. This was one of the only rooms that didn't have a class in session already. I dropped to a fetal position and prayed we wouldn't find me here. The lights were turned off but there was just enough sunlight coming from the window that he could see me. I heard his heavy footsteps coming closer, closed my eyes and looked down. The door opened and I crumbled inside. I knew he was looking at me but I didn't want to look up. "You dropped your wallet," the man said. I slowly raised my head to disbelief. But it was too late he was already gone. My wallet was sitting next to me on an empty desk.

The stone cellar reverberated with shrieks of the infant I held in the burlap sack at my side. I bolted the heavy wooden door and turned to face my operation room; bare but for the chilled steel table in its very center. I reached down into the sack and pulled out, by its foot, my screaming burden. Its face was very red, entirely unattractive.

I set the thing down on my table and retreated to the back corner of the room to the lone cupboards mounted next to the painted out windows. Retrieving the amber bottle from its shelf, I uncorked my stock of whiskey and took a swig. The baby's noise had been muffled by the bag, now it was close to unbearable. It would soon grow worse; now was the time for the whiskey. After one more gulp I replaced the bottle and pulled out my instrument box, black leather-bound, that laughed with a hearty jingle when I gave it a shake.

I had to run to the table quickly as I saw that the babe nearly wriggled its way onto the floor. No damaged merchandise here, oh no. I pulled the buckles from underneath the table-top and strapped the soft pink thing down securely to the cold steel. The table had been cleaned in preparation for tonight. I looked down on it and smiled at my blurred reflection, completely indistinguishable but for the prominent black beard.

I jumped as the child gave an unnaturally high wail. I slammed my fist next to its face on the table, but it only squawked louder. I sat on the dirt floor and covered my ears, breathing deeply. This act required precision, I couldn't let frustration interfere. Deep breaths. I focused on why I was here, the soul reason for my actions. My hatred was rekindled.

Calmed, I stood. The whiskey would help soon, but for the time being the screams would just have to be ignored. I looked into the supply box and decided on the obsidian scalpel to start. Normally I started with a heavier tool, but I'd be sure to take my time on this one, this extremely annoying one. Secured tightly, the infant hadn't moved an inch. It couldn't even shake its head effectively. Good, a fine place to start.

The first cut was always my favorite. Sometimes the screaming would stop completely and a look of innocent surprise would light up my victim's face for an instant. I joyed in the guessing game. What would I do next? Soon I'd leave them with little room for confusion. I'd had a good number of practice rounds before this one, but I'd never yet been disappointed by the reaction slice number one got. I'd have more fun with this one than the others combined.

Its forehead was purple with concentrated screaming. The pointed edge found its mark, and with a little pressure the skin split like a perfectly cooked sausage. As anticipated, a brief moment of blissful silence. A fat bead of blood covered the incision, then burst and trailed noiselessly into the curly bed of hair above it. I concentrated on the eyes. The baby couldn't know what was about to ensue, but the fear was there. So intellectual, so present, fear was the most intelligent emotion. But my hatred was the strongest.

[REDACTED]

The black Mercedes pulled up in front of North Hill High School. Jax nervously ran her fingers through her short dark brown hair then letting it fall back down covering her pale face and darkened eyes. She took off her black square glasses to clean them for the hundredth time. She looked again towards the school.

Jax's father unlocked the doors and gave a heavy sigh. "So.. first day of your last year. Excited?"

"Just getting through Dad." She gave him a small smile and then got out of the car and made her way towards the front doors. Before she got to the door she set her face into one of stone, uncaring and immovable. She entered the building like a dark and stormy force. She seemed more shadow than real set against the contrasting light of the September morning. She felt like every eye was watching her, whispering behind her back and giving her pointed glances as she walked by. Whether they really were or not she didn't know and didn't want to turn to look. She felt like an intruder to their scene.

Her black combat boots barely sounded in the hall as she walked. Her slim figure was accentuated by the black leggings under the black denim skirt and black t-shirt. She had black fish net sleeves that went down to her hands but were cut off at the finger. People stopped to watch her as she passed. Expressions torn with uncertainty of what to think of her, between curiosity and fear, were on the faces of those she passed.

She found her way to her first class and took a seat on the second row at the far side of the room. The room was a colorful blast of visual stimulation. There was no space that was not covered in posters. There were posters of different countries and movie posters and prints of famous pieces of art. The teacher was standing at the front of the room wrapped in a floor length black shawl with long fringes. She had wrapped the shawl around her like a bat folding its wings. She had long straight red hair that was being held back from her face by two pairs of glasses that sat on top of her head. She didn't say anything, didn't move at all, just stood and watched as each person walked in. The other students started filing in. Each person spared a glance at the girl sitting by the wall and then turned their attention to the colorful bat person at the front of the room. The presence of the teacher in such a stance gave an almost eerie feeling and it made stillness creep through the room. The bell rang, and still the teacher had not moved. Everyone was quiet, waiting expectantly for something to happen.

"WHO ARE YOU?!?!?" The teacher threw her arms wide and the entire class jumped at the teacher's explosion of speech. Under the black shawl was a long black and white cow hide dress. The bat had morphed into a flying cow. Every face was one of wide eyed confusion at the strangeness of this teacher.

She rewrapped her shawl around her and started walking around the room. She stopped in front of a sloppy looking guy in the back corner and pointed at him. "Who are you?"

The Trail to Mero Junction

Wagon Train

Men loaded final provisions while the moms gathered children, shuffling them into the wagons, headed through the rugged high country of western Nevada to the thriving new city of Trebour Lake.

"I'll be there in two weeks," Randall Patterson said, embracing his oldest daughter, Sara. "Send a post from every city. Make Lily write, too." He squeezed back tears, took in one, last breath of her thick, brown hair and glanced toward the waiting men across the street.

An anxious pain surged through her, anticipating a journey with her young sister to a new home far from the home they had always known. She brushed away tears. "I will, Pappa."

Curtis Watson, CW for short, stood with his foreman, Doxy, watching Randall and his daughters. Doxy blew a soft, grimacing whistle. "That oldest daughter is a looker," he said, flicking his cigarette and stamping it out with his dusty boot. "She sure will make this trip more fun."

"Just keep your mind and your men where they're supposed to be. And leave Miss Sara Patterson to me," CW snapped.

Randall lifted Lily, his eleven-year-old onto the step of their wagon. "Mind Sara," he said.

Catherine breathed out a sigh of relief to be away from Prince Ian. The way you could feel his cold stare on you even past those dark glasses was creepy enough. But Catherine's abilities had decided to work well enough that she could practically taste the cold evil emanating from the cursed spectacles. Convinced now that her decision was correct, Catherine was ready to leave.

Down the hall Catherine saw Princess Miranda ahead and called out to her. The princess paused and turned, allowing Catherine to catch up to her.

"Your Highness, I've just been to see the prince." Catherine saw the expectation in Miranda's eyes and hurried on with her explanation. "I heard Lord Sannon talking to Wizard Affon. You need someone here who can deal with cursed objects. I resigned." Catherine did not add that Prince Ian's response was along the lines of "good riddance, now get out".

"Oh," Miranda said.

"When I'm gone you'll be able to bring someone else in, someone who can help," Catherine explained.

"Where will you go?" Miranda asked.

"Back to the Academy," Catherine answered. "I need to find out why I'm having problems performing magic." She paused, then said, "Sometimes magic works for me. I *was* able to check those glasses for magic."

"You did?" Miranda's words came quickly. "Are they cursed?"

"Powerfully. Even if I had control over my magic I wouldn't be able to remove the curse. I'll tell Wizard Affon, too, but you need someone really good, someone with experience," Catherine said.

"Will the curse hurt Ian?" Miranda asked worriedly.

Catherine shook her head. "Not directly. But the way it's making him act..."

Miranda nodded. "He's razing foreign relations, firing ministers, and alienating everyone – just in one day. He'll destroy Lassale at this rate."

"Yes."

Silence stretched between the two women for several minutes before Miranda spoke again. "I'd like to get my hands around Lady Ellis's neck. I'd do it, too, if the ambassadors from the other countries weren't here. But they need to see that the rest of us still have it together."

"I'm sorry," Catherine said. "He doesn't mean what he's been saying or doing."

"I'm glad for that, at least. Thank you for your help. Safe travel."

In the Pit

[REDACTED]

Mother had to pull me out of bed this morning. I argued with her and said "I don't want to get up."

"Come on Danny," said mother. We have to get ready for the wedding."

I pulled the covers back over myself and said "I'm not going. I don't want to see peters stupid wedding."

"Know stop that," mother said, pulling the covers back off me. "It doesn't matter if you want to go, your brothers getting married today, and you will be there to support him. Now get yourself ready, or I will ground you with no TV for a week."

Not wanting to, I got up and got ready for the wedding, the whole time sulking about the wedding. Peter was going to leave me after today, and I won't ever see him again.

Peter was my favorite brother, and my best friend. Ever since I was five years old, peter and I would play together almost every day. He would take me to the zoo, the movies, the park, and many other places. He was always there for me when I felt sad or scared. At night he would come into my room and scare the monsters away from my closet and tell me funny bedtime stories to help me get to sleep. I loved him very much.

Then last year, Peter moved out of our house to go to college in another town far away. He wasn't very far away, and he would come home to visit every other month, and on Thanksgiving and Christmas. But he wasn't their every day like when He was going to high school. When he left for college he told me that he would move home after school got out at Easter, and we would spend the whole summer together.