

English Plus Short Stories.

Lycée Dupuy de Lôme, Lorient

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Présentation :

Ce recueil est le résultat d'un travail de la classe de Terminale Littéraire en cours de Langue Vivante Approfondie.

Nous avons étudié le genre littéraire la Nouvelle et les élèves avaient comme tâches d'évaluation une analyse et une production. Certains ont choisi de ne pas publier.

Ces nouvelles sont les leurs.

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Happy Families by Anne Mathon

Mr. and Mrs. Douceur lived in a huge mansion in a little village. They had been very famous for years and had chosen to withdraw to the countryside for more tranquility. Joseph Douceur was a handsome blond-haired, well-built gentleman whose parents, both French, had emigrated from France in order to live the American dream. Every woman in the hundred kilometers surrounding him was secretly in love with Joseph. He had been an actor and had met Mary, his future wife, on a film set, where they had acted a man and his wife.

Mary, a fine-looking and pure blond-haired lady, had also been a model for a very expensive brand of women's underwear. No man could resist her beauty and charm. They were envied by everyone for their perfect relationship and life. The Douceurs wanted to have a child and had tried many times before Mary got pregnant, unexpectedly at the same time as their neighbor, Mrs. Kindness.

Mr. and Mrs. Kindness were small and brown-haired, and were very humble farmers who already had two children. During their pregnancy, the two women became very close friends and spent hours together. They also gave birth the same day but something awful happened. Sadly, the Douceur's baby died a few hours after his birth. Mary and Joseph were affected for years, every day they saw baby Lily becoming a girl, then a young woman. She made them remember their lost child but they were not jealous, they were delighted for the Kindness family. They maintained very good relations with their neighbors and their other two children: Veronica and Philip, in spite of the distance which settled between Lily and them.

Veronica was the eldest. She was not good-looking and not loved by everyone because of her difficult temper. School was not easy for her, she had no skills to dance, sing, or draw and did not have a lot of friends. Students called her "the witch-farmer". Until the age of nineteen, she had always reluctantly helped her parents on the farm whereas she had enjoyed horse-riding with Mrs. Douceur who taught her once a week. But one day, she fell and decided not to ride a horse again in her whole life. She was a hot-tempered girl and, even if she had not been very polite with her neighbors since her fall, Mary and Joseph Douceur liked her a lot. When she had a fight with her parents she often went to the Douceur's to find comfort. She secretly preferred Mary and Joseph to her parents. She took good care of Philip who was four years younger than her, but hated her little sister who was better than her at everything, even if she was thirteen years younger than her. Then she flirted with some farmer's child of the area, whose mother was certainly secretly in love with Joseph Douceur. She fled and married him at the age of nineteen. They founded a little restaurant in a big city, became richer, fatter and uglier and had two fat, ugly boys who spent their time playing video games, watching television, eating fries and chocolate and being fat and ugly. Their parents had called them Ronald and Donald.

Philip, Veronica's little brother, was not really pretty, but not really ugly, he was common. He looked like every common, brown-haired boy and growing up did not change anything about it. He was polite and respected everyone. He had always been bad at school and stopped when he was fourteen but Mr. Douceur agreed to prepare him in French and mathematics for the risks of everyday life, because Philip was a pleasant boy. Like his sister, Philip helped his parents on the farm but enjoyed it. When he was sixteen, he asked to be paid, and so he was, besides being accommodated and fed. He wasn't paid a lot in the beginning but he asked for more money, as the years went by. He had amassed enough money to leave on the day of his twenty-first birthday and left to become a guide in New-Zealand. During the two years

following his departure, he sent postcards to his parents and his little sister and phoned them once a month explaining that he had not managed to become a guide but had become a garbage man, then a waiter in a pub where he had met a woman named Kristin, with whom he had bought a dog and created an ecological farm with twenty other friends. After that, he had been silent for a whole year as far as his parents were concerned but had given news to Lily on her mobile phone. For the four last years, he had only phoned his parents at Christmas and always ended with:

"OK Mom, I must go, Kristin and the dog are waiting for me. Kiss Lily and Dad for me. Yes, I love you, too. Yes, I will call you soon, bye Mom!"

Then Mrs. Kindness always cried in her husband's arms and called Lily for dinner.

Lily Kindness was a beautiful, blond-haired girl who had always been a good student at school. She had good friends, skills in drawing, singing, and dancing and wanted to make her parents' lives better. Lily was intelligent, and nice and polite with everyone; parents, neighbors, friends, Philip and even strangers. She was about six years old when Veronica left home, so she didn't remember her big sister a lot. Contrary to Veronica, Lily had never fought with her parents, that is the reason she did not know Mary and Joseph Douceur very well, even if she wanted to. She often spied on them because she found their life too perfect to be real. She loved everyone and everyone loved her. She was the perfect daughter everybody would have loved to have. But her mother did not realize how envied she was for her daughter anymore. In fact, Veronica's flight and Philip's departure had made Mrs. Kindness depressive. With her medication, she was tired and distracted at all times of the day. She was small, chunky and her damaged grey hair gave her the appearance of a witch. An absolutely crazy witch since she had begun her medication.

Mr. Kindness had hidden his despair in alcohol when Veronica fled. Once a week, he went to the pub, drinking alcohol with his friends, and when he came back late at night or early in the morning, he slept on the sofa. But the rest of the week, he acted like an ordinary man, farmer and father. When Philip left home, Mr. Kindness went to the pub once a day, and when the pub was closed, he hid in the barn with some hard whiskey to drink alone, away from his wife who had become totally incomprehensible. Mr. Kindness had lived in this farm since his birth, his parents had been farmers before him. He was a bit small and not really good-looking but he was nice to everyone. He had always been faithful and loyal to his wife but was unfortunately too naive with her. Indeed, like every woman, Mrs. Kindness had loved Joseph Douceur for years.

Mr. Kindness was nice but jealous. He was jealous of his children, Veronica and Philip, who had managed to escape this poor American farmer's monotonous, boring and insipid life. He was jealous of his parents, who were already dead as he wanted to be. And moreover, he was jealous of his neighbors, especially Joseph, with whom he had drunk some sophisticated wines while the ladies were having a cup of tea in the living room. Joseph, who often helped him milk the cows and collect the straw. Joseph, who had played with his children when Mr. Kindness didn't have the time for it. Joseph, who had given Philip mathematics and French lessons while Mr. Kindness couldn't because he had stopped school when he was thirteen years old, to help his father on the farm. Joseph, the famous actor adulated by all. Joseph was the man that he had always wanted to be. Deep down in his heart, he felt better than Joseph on one point; he had children, and the last one was alive and perfect. Lily was the sunshine which kept him alive. He was proud of her.

July was the month Mary and Joseph hated. It was the month of Lily's birthday and also their dead child's. July was sad. The cemetery was dirty and the happiness of others was hard to bear.

"Ten days and it's my birthday," Lily repeated in her mind. She was almost twenty years old. It was time to leave home. But how could she leave without breaking her parents' hearts. If she left, her mother would probably not survive and her father would drink more alcohol and be sadder. She did not want to make their lives more awful than they were. She loved her parents and could not leave them alone, even if she came back every week-end. She had to speak to someone else.

Lily dialed the number and waited for somebody to pick up. A woman's voice which was not Kristin's asked:

"Hello, who are you?"

"Hello, I am Lily Kindness, Philip's little sister, could you please pass on a message?", requested Lily.

"I am sorry but Philip has left for two weeks. He is on a trip with Kristin."

"Ok, thank you nevertheless." And Lily got off the phone.

Philip would not answer before her birthday but she needed help as soon as possible. She had explained the problem to her friends but they only told her to forget her old and damaged parents, and to think about herself and her future. Lily dialed Veronica's number on the phone. She waited.

"What do you want? It's nine o'clock, Are you serious? You woke me up! " roared an angry voice.

Frightened, Lily got off the phone and breathed out deeply, hard. She had made her decision, and put on her most beautiful clothes. Then she crept down the stairs and walked silently to the front door so she would not wake her mother up.

Once outside, she crossed the farm without making her beautiful shoes dirty. She repeated twice in a low voice: "Good Morning, I am Lily Kindness, the neighbors' last daughter, I will be twenty years old in ten days and I am not brave enough to leave my parents alone. I need to find a solution not to hurt them. Please, help me."

In front of the door, she knocked three times and waited. Nobody came. Was it too early to knock? Was it a good idea to ask strangers for help?

"How can I help you, my dear?"

Lily looked the man over who was standing in the door frame, smiling and friendly. He was impressive, taller than her father and much better looking. His blond hair seemed silky and his teeth white and clean.

"Are you lost?" asked Joseph Douceur, still smiling.

"I am Lily ..." She was not able to remember the rest of her speech. She blushed.

"Oh, Lily. Yes, come in Lily, do not stay outside. How can I help you, Lily?" he asked gently.

"I ... I came ... " she could not make a sentence. There was a big silence and Lily got more embarrassed.

"How old are you now? You have grown up too fast. I remember you as a baby!"

"I will be twenty years old in ten days, sir," she answered, shyly.

Amazed, Joseph realized that Lily did not have brown eyes like the rest of her family. She was blue-eyed, a blue deeper than Mary's eyes.

"Please, do not call me "sir", call me Joseph."

Lily nodded her head to say yes, while Joseph was still fascinated by her eyes. Joseph also realized that she was the only one of the family with blond hair, and moreover that she didn't look like anyone in the Kindness family. Mary Douceur came downstairs and stopped when she saw Lily. Joseph spoke first:

"This is Lily, the neighbors' last daughter. She will be twenty in ten days! And Lily, this is my wife Mary. You may have already seen her."

An uncomfortable silence followed. Then Lily decided to speak:

"Could you help me, please?"

"Certainly, Lily. What can we do for you?" asked Joseph.

"I would like to leave the village to become a doctor. But you know my parents, they would be devastated if I left," explained Lily. "I am scared but also do not want to stay here and be a farmer all my life. I do not need my parents but I think that they need me, or someone who could take care of them like I do."

"We understand Lily, but we can't. We are not as young as we used to be and we do not have the same energy. I would really like to help you but if I had to give you some advice I would tell you that you have to do what you judge right for yourself, even if you make sacrifices as well..." said Joseph, glancing at Mary who was staring at Lily as if she had seen the Holy Virgin. Lily lowered her head and looked at her feet.

"Why don't you come for the tea, today? We could chat and take the time to find a solution for you, sweetie," reassured Mary.

They agreed on a meeting at four o'clock and said goodbye to each other. Mary stayed in the hall half an hour, ill at ease. Joseph let her cool off alone.

He went to the kitchen to drink his coffee. He sat down on a chair, his mind elsewhere, thinking about Lily who could have been his daughter. He closed his eyes and saw himself taking her little hand in the fields, teaching her how to ride a horse. He saw Mary who joined them with some cake to eat on the green grass. Lily had grown up and she had graduated, Mary and he were so proud of their beautiful and intelligent daughter. She invited her boyfriend to dinner, and they had a good time together. Lily announced her pregnancy to them. Mary and he were fulfilled and ...

"Joseph, Mr. Kindness is waiting for you," shouted Mary from the hall.

He had forgotten that he had told Mr. Kindness that he would help him milk the cows. Joseph woke up, stood up and went to the hall with bitterness in his heart.

The two men went outside and Mary remained alone in her home, still thinking about Lily. Life was so unfair! Lily had the worst parents ever. Mary would have taken good care of her if she had been her own daughter. Mr. and Mrs. Kindness were not happy, even with their perfect last daughter. Fate was unfair. Lily should have been their daughter.

"What awful things am I thinking about?" she thought, ashamed.

Then she made her best cake to honor their guest.

Mrs. Kindness had been waiting for her husband and Lily to leave since she woke up. Now that they were outside, she could get on with her secret destruction. She took the letters which she had kept hidden and she put them in the fireplace. She glanced around herself frightened as if she was guilty of something and she lit the fire. But then she realized that one letter was missing. She went upstairs and saw Lily reading it.

"Oh Lily, please give it to me, it's a letter for my medication, I need it," Mrs. Kindness begged in a hypocritical way.

But Lily had already read the letter. She tumbled down the stairs, tears in her eyes. She went to the Douceur's but Joseph was not at home. She rang again and again until Mary heard her and opened the door. Lily was sobbing. She gave Mary the letter. For the following hours, they ate cake in the kitchen, crying silently. When Joseph came back, Mary showed him the letter:

"Mr. and Mrs. Kindness,

Your daughter Miss Lily Kindness was born ten years ago in our hospital. The same day, other children were born, but one of them died a few hours after his death. Our employees may have made an error for the birth, by giving you someone else's child. That is why your daughter Lily Kindness has to do a biological kinship test. Please, come to the hospital as soon as possible.

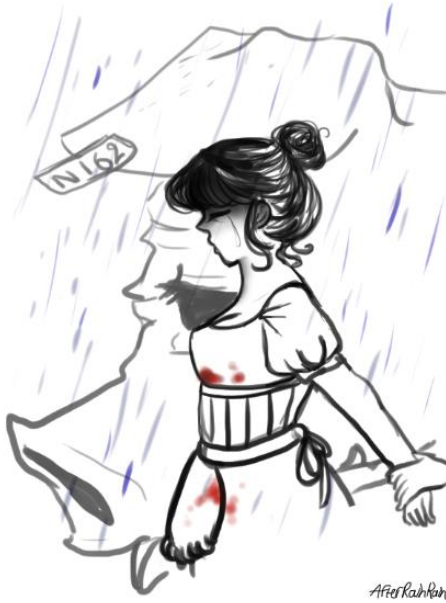
*Cordially,
St James Hospital. "*

Mary and Joseph Douceur did not speak again to the Kindnesses and moved two weeks later to a big house in facing the sea, in a big city, with their daughter Lily, who started studying medicine. They planned the biological kinship test a week later, but the results were already positive in their three minds. Lily was loved, admired and supported by her parents. Life had not been easy up to then, but now it was perfect.

The week following their move, Lily went to her appointment at the hospital. She was not anxious because she already knew that her parents were Mary and Joseph. They all were blond-haired and talented in everything. She waited in a room, alone. Then the doctor called her. She sat down on a chair in front of him. He gave her some papers and said:

"I think that it is not a surprise for you, I apologize for having made you come and do the kinship test. Indeed, you are Mr. and Mrs. Kindness' daughter. I am sorry for the disturbance, thank you for coming, now you can go."

A Breton Secret by Cameron Le Merlus



His name is Gael.

But this is not a story about him.

This story started in the town of Ker*****, in the Brittany wilds. It's a story about a couple. At first sight, they look absolutely normal; happy in their little farm, in their little inn. At first sight only.

Kaelig is a bossy woman of 40. She is strong-willed, and for a woman of this age, she's an absolute force of Nature. She is entirely conscious of herself and it is quite a good trait for an inn-keeper, which is what she is. Her husband, Jakez, is the only one who doesn't flinch at the frosty look she can give when she is angry or whatever negative emotions she has. Jakez is a little bit older than his wife, and people have always thought that he loves his farm too much, and rumors says that he once became mad about a kid giving bread to his pig. He is a pork breeder, and sometimes cares more about his pigs than his wife. He can really be a creep about that.

The '*Boui Boui du Korrigan*', Kaelig's inn, is somewhat famous in the town. It is a bit lost in the country, but it gets about 45 clients per month, which is really admirable for an inn that cheap in price. People said that it comes from the cozy atmosphere.

But, this story is not about a couple being lovey-dovey and all living happily ever after.

'How dare you?'

It all ended one rainy afternoon. He knew that it would happen one day. He continued to drag it on the mud in the direction of the pig, while the woman walking by his side was sobbing, whining, and sniffing on the sleeve of her messy dress. Kaelig was completely aware of what she had done, and of the impact it would have on everything. She had made the big mistake. After all, she couldn't keep everything secret. It was a heavy secret. And now, he was terribly angry, and she was terribly anxious. She thought that maybe he wanted to kill everybody. She wanted to pack up and go far, far, far away from the farm, her inn the '*Boui Boui du Korrigan*', her town... her couple.

One week before, everything was okay.

Her husband was so proud of their wedding, their work... their secret which was so well hidden. In fact, they didn't have any idea that their little secret would be discovered all of a sudden.

This secret, Jakez had had the idea 5 years before. It had shocked Kaelig at first, that her husband could have this kind of dark side. But they discovered together that it was, actually, the best idea of their life. Jakez got the idea when the food for his pigs started to decrease overnight, without any rational explanation. Jakez couldn't sleep for nights. He started to wander at night

through the town, depressed, trying to find answers and solutions. And he got there. The cemetery. And everything started from there. He told Kaelig his idea, and tried for days and days to convince her to help. He begged her like he never had and once she accepted his proposition, she herself started to think about a creepier one. And the whole joke came to life, without major problems.

Until that morning, a week before.

Kaelig didn't think that Gael would come to town. He was her first high school love, the prince of the prom. She had always thought she was privileged, because she was the one he talked to at school, and they became only very good friends. But he came to her town. Gael had heard about the inn, and went there to meet her as if they were returning back 25 years into the past. Jakez didn't mind about that man sleeping in the inn and being all close with his wife, he considered him as a client.

But finally, he was like all the others, now. Kaelig had made the mistake: Gael happened to hear the truth about the secret.

Jakez took the heavy weight, and threw it over the fence, just like with the others. The pigs instantly woke up at the noise and they ran insanely at the corpse, grunting and making a frightening 'oiiiiink!'.

Kaelig wept louder and louder, and took a few steps back.

'You... You're a monster, Jakez,' Kaelig stammered.

He didn't listen, being more entertained by the massacre happening before his very eyes. Facing the situation, Kaelig made a choice. He had killed her first love and friend! She was still behind him. Gathering her courage and her strength... she grabbed him by the head and turned it quickly to the right to hear a loud 'CRACK' that surprised her. He died instantly. She threw his corpse over the other side, with the pigs, in the same way Jakez had done it with Gael.

She breathed furiously.

This was clearly the 2nd best idea of her life.

The time-travel bowl by Hugo Nucci

It happened in a little apartment lost in the suburbs of Lazytown. As told in that grandiloquent name, nothing ever happened there.

Yet as Danny was having his breakfast in his cosy flat, underpants on and an old rag which he called his morning t-shirt, watching some stupid TV show all stupid people like to watch with glassy eyes, he suddenly felt a strange breeze touching his 3-day beard after his first bite of that bowl of cereal he'd just bought the day before...

The stupid TV show was no longer on in the room, his couch had gone and more importantly, his apartment had disappeared!

He was simply sitting there, in a field, a strange smell covering the air, as he could hear distinct shouts coming from the woods surrounding the clearing he was sitting in.

Suddenly a horde of forms came out of the branches, sending out war cries and running like the devil possessed them, wearing spiky helmets and fur coats. They were coming in Danny's direction and his face turned as white as the milk in his bowl.

Oh, poor Danny, the only thing you could do at that moment was take another bite of the floating parts battling in your bowl, such was your surprise...

Everything disappeared again, the poor guy was standing on a floor which looked like a tatami, he recognized a room, some tapestries covered the walls, showing dragons and cherry trees, a delightful perfume filled the atmosphere, this place looked like an Asian palace... Danny watched his bowl closely and hesitatingly, and to be sure of where he was at he grabbed his spoon firmly and swallowed some more of the remaining cereal.

"Out of the way, dalcop*!" babbled an old guy with only three teeth in his mouth, who was pulling a wooden cart full of stinking bags on a muddy road, in the middle of what seemed to be a medieval village.

Everyone looked at the young man ferociously.

Thinking he had gone crazy, Danny ate three spoonsful of his soft cereal before feeling a freezing, snowy air swept past him. The storm was so violent he couldn't see anything around him...

Until one, two... no, three shapes became more and more clear to his frozen eyes. Animals, it seemed; big animals. Elephants? Wait that wouldn't make any sense... Oh, dammit, mammoths! Three, no four... Oh gosh, a herd of mammoth running towards him!

He knew he would never be able to get out of the way in time so with the same reflex he took another bite while closing his eyelids and contracting every muscle as if it was the last day of his life.

The cold was now replaced by pleasant heat and as the snow on his skin started to melt he decided to go for a little walk in that new landscape, a pretty beach rocked by a relaxing silence.

Hang on; footprints in the sand. Another animal he guessed, yet those tracks felt very unfamiliar.

“You must be kidding,” Danny sighed while admiring a bunch of flying... dinosaurs!

A second later, a flash behind the clouds blinded our friend and as he tried to raise his head, a huge shiny, fiery ball fell on the surface, creating a massive earthquake, an enormous wave formed itself and a shockwave pushed Danny onto the floor. This little paradise became an apocalypse.

He knew he could only take another sip of his milk so that's what he did.

A couch? A couch... Yet it wasn't his.

That apartment wasn't his either, the room he was in was pretty dark but he could see a curtain that was a bit brighter than anything else in that place; maybe the sunlight?

Curious, he pulled it back and found himself facing a ton of skyscrapers so high he couldn't perceive the top or the bottom of them. Yet he could see cars but they weren't on the road, no, of course that would be too normal, right? Flying cars, pal, flying cars everywhere!

And as if that wasn't enough, the sky announced, “night time” before turning dark. This whole place was artificial, and that assumption confirmed itself when a robot told the young man he was on private property and that he had to leave without further ado or he would arrest him.

“Uh... yes, sorry dude,” scoffed Danny before eating the last of his cereal.

It happened in that little apartment lost in the suburbs of Lazytown. As told in that grandiloquent name, nothing ever happened there...

**dalcop* is a Medieval insult, the rough equivalent of *dunderhead* or *fool*.

A Special Day by Juliette Hérissou-Garin

"I have been doing this job for two consecutive years, but I feel like I started yesterday. I really do not want to stop anytime soon, that's why I have to maintain my efforts to hope to continue. All these efforts are not pointless, I know. However, on some days this is hard. Thankfully my wife is always there to help me. Some days I think of giving up, but my hope of seeing the world change is stronger than anything. All my team is behind me, and I find it wonderful. They are a real family for me, and I think my victory is also theirs. We have been working tirelessly for two years, now in the hope of seeing things change. What I want from the bottom of my heart is to see poverty fall. I have already partially banned nuclear tests, I think that this action will have positive repercussions on the world. Great countries must not kill each other, they must not make useless wars in order to know who is stronger. We have to protect our people, and if we have to give up chemical weapons, we will. Everything I do, I do it for you. I do it to keep peace in our country, to offer to you a better life. I only want your good, that our own good, citizens of the United States. I want our children to grow up in a healthy world, where happiness rhymes with peace. Thank you for everything, I am infinitely grateful for all that you bring to me daily."

"So, how do you find it?" John said.

"I really love it! You will be perfect, I am sure, as always," replied Jackie gently.

"I hope. You know, the state of Texas is very important, I have to collect the maximum of votes," he said.

"Yes, I know honey. Be yourself and all will be well, they did not elect you president for nothing," Jackie said.

"Yes, you are right, my love. I think it is time to go," John said calmly.

The presidential couple left from the plane which had already been on the ground for twenty minutes. The president took Jackie by the hand and smiled broadly at the paparazzi. Finally, a car arrived and the couple got in. Then, the couple headed for Dealey Plaza.

Faith by Loïs Egron

It was his ritual. Lucien always used to go for a walk in the park before going to church. This dominical procession could seem tedious, but Lucien was genuinely devoted to his inconsiderate passion for the Gospel, the Holy Bible, the worship of his beliefs.

His steps naturally guided him to the cold benches of Saint Sebastian chapel, to his favourite spot: right in the middle of the vast, low-ceilinged, stone room. Only on this exact seat could he fully appreciate the strange, almost hypnotic texture of Father Christophe's words. These holy sentences, at times troubled by the dim swish of the pages turned, were the only food Lucien needed, not in his flesh, but for the well-being of his spirit. For a whole hour, he listened carefully to the long speech as Father Christophe rambled on.

After having thanked him and lit a candle, brooding almost delightfully at the spiritual food he had just consumed, Lucien walked home, his sweet haven of peace. Entering the living room, he passed by the mirror, getting a glimpse of his own reflection. "A man, simply a man," he would peacefully tell his counterpart in the morning as he shaved. Lucien did not want to be more than simply a man. Yet, people always said he was very charismatic, even bewitching. The truth was that Lucien only had to ask it for his representative to fulfill his least desire. He could have done great things with this charm; had a better job, a better house in a better place, but that, he did not want it in any way. If a man of faith like himself became dominated by frivolous desires, then he would no longer have pure and selfless intention; it would be a sin. This choice had been getting him into some trouble, as people would not or could not understand it. Even in troubled and disrupted times, he never gave in to sin, and kept his unwavering hope. But his aboveboard attitude inescapably generated a violent envy among those who were acquainted with him. Suddenly, a voice rose, waking him up from his daydream.

"Lucien, is that you?"

His wife, Emelin, emerged from the little kitchen next to the lounge. He smiled, lenient. Of course it was him, who else? His son Louis had already sat down at the table, patiently waiting for the lunch to be set. Around the table, the same questions tirelessly swirled between the little family. Was the service as enthralling as usual? Would Louis come to church next Sunday? Louis would always shyly answer "no" to the indulgent smile of his father.

Lots of people in his neighbourhood thought Lucien was a crank, some of them even tried to pose him as dangerously mad. Lucien's faith was so strong that it scared people. They did not know what hope was like. They did not want to understand. But Lucien did not care. He kept on being good and merciful. God would protect him from the hatred.

The week went on and the Lord's day came. On his way home, Lucien had the strange sensation of being watched. He stopped, interrupted, as a hoarse voice called his name. He barely had time to turn towards the person who had spoken. A sharp pain took his breath away and the blows started raining down. His blood flowed down his throat, spreading its bitter taste in his mouth.

The stranger pushed him to the floor, holding him to the ground with one arm and whispering: "Since you love your God that much, let me do you the favor of making you meet him!" A flash again, then Lucien sank into the darkness. The loudness of his bones breaking became silence.

Left for dead, he woke up two days later between the white walls of the hospital. Him being alive was a miracle, but Lucien felt something broken inside of him. He was scared: Why hadn't God protected him from being molested, beaten, broken down? He still could hear the awful voice of his assaulter. Had he done something wrong? If so, what?

A month later, he woke up soaked with sweat. An intense heat prevailed in the bedroom. He turned to his wife but the seat next to him was empty. He went down the stairs in a halting, jerky pace. The furnace was getting hotter at each step he took. When he reached the ground floor, he couldn't help but gasp in despair: The living room was on fire, and in the middle of the inferno laid the calcinated corpses of Louis and Emelin. Lucien rushed towards the bodies regardless of the ardent flames. But it was no use. They were dead.

He fell down onto his knees, shouting for help, begging God for mercy. But his calls remained ignored. God was frozen and silent. For the first time, Lucien had the feeling of being totally alone. His beliefs and his convictions were the result of trust in a God who, in the end, never protected him. The life of devotion he had been living was over. There was no longer hope, there was no longer indulgence, there was no longer faith. Faith and ignorance had killed his family. Those people who couldn't understand the strength of his belief had condemned them to the blaze and God had let this happen.

The flames were devouring his skin, he was coughing his lungs out. The darkness wrapped him. He was now nothing but anger and hate. Violence had generated even more violence. Lucien no longer wanted to be simply a man. He wanted to be a master, he wanted to be a God. At that moment, he knew he would fight mercy, hope and kindness.

Death to Lucien, long live Lucifer.

One Caress by Marine Lambert



"She was young and very beautiful, but pale, like the grey pallor of death."

The Lady of the Shroud, Bram Stoker.

As far as I can remember, I was always bored. Nothing interested me. The whole world was indifferent to me. Until I started to paint. I could create a world, my world. However, it was a too superficial art, lacking in life. I wanted to paint... live things.

I had an epiphany at a ballet. The grace of the dancers touched me. That's when I started a new style of painting. I painted beautiful red dresses on women whose beauty moved me. Unfortunately, they never survived. Their dresses became their shroud.

Then, I met you, splendid and bewitching.

You always smiled at me, you never ran away from me. And after all, you understood me, my work, my search for beauty. You laughed when I told you what had happened to my three previous models. I was so full of admiration for you. Then, for you too, I wanted to draw a sumptuous blood-colour dress. I invited you one evening to pose for me. I sharpened my knife and started to paint. You didn't even move. You didn't even say a word. I didn't understand... You were still there, looking at me. How could this be, my lady-love? In this beautiful dark red dress made especially for you. It descended like an evanescent cascade from your throat to your feet. You were so dazzling in it. You smiled at me tenderly, your eyes, as blue as frost, stared at me with so much gentleness. I fell to my knees, overwhelmed by so much beauty. None of the ladies for whom I made this dress wore it. All of them fell after the third notch, while the dress wasn't even at their hips. What sadness! And they screamed, screamed so loudly. What's more beautiful than a woman's voice at its climax?

Oh, I knew that what I did wasn't orthodox, wasn't normal. But which genius cares about being normal? I was an artist at the height of his glory. A painter who only used red. A visionary that nobody understood. But you, pretty goddess, you understood me and I knew it. I saw this on your face, while my paint brush was still anchored in your chest. Yes, you understood me, and you forgot all of my misdeeds.

*Well, I'm down on my knees again,
And I pray to the only one
Who has the strength to bear the pain
To forgive all the things that I've done (*)*

I saw you kneeling toward me, a sweet smile on your lips. You caressed my cheek with you fine fingers. Your eyes plunged into mine, soaked up my soul, and killed any instinct of struggle in me. In the depths of me I knew, I could never be anything to anyone else. How did you do that, O muse of my heart? Nothing in the world had fascinated me as much as you did

at that moment. Nothing in the world was interesting to me. Everything bored me, wearied me. Then I took refuge in my art that nobody understood, that everybody hated. But you appeared; intelligent and understanding. You supported me, you encouraged me. You said you'd known only a few artists with my sensitivity, with my talent. That's why I wanted so much to dress you in red. I wanted you to be a part of my work. I didn't know who else to paint. My knife was worn out. I despaired of no longer finding a model.

*When you think you've tried every road,
Every avenue,
Take one more look on what you found old
And in it you'll find something new... (*)*

You used to say it. You often told me never to give up, to keep holding on. You often said that the world was full of wonders that just needed to be found, that a billion shades of red existed just to serve my work.

"Believe me, I've been on Earth for a long time, I know what I'm talking about..." you insisted. And you were right; I've found you. I looked into the ocean of your eyes. I sometimes saw a dark and boisterous sea, and sometimes an oasis of sweetness. I fell in love with these eyes, with the hue of gloominess in your heart. This kind of blackness in you always obsessed me. You helped me to get up, still smiling. I was crying for joy, you wiped away my tears with your fingers and tasted them. Then, you decided to put some music on. *Nocturne*, by Chopin. Beautiful choice; you are a creature of the night. You invited me to dance. How could I resist? I wasn't controlling anything, you could play with my will so easily. No matter what you wanted me to do, I did it. It was as if I was possessed.

We danced slowly, gently, you in your beautiful red dress, me drowning myself in your eyes and in the sweet hell in them.

*Oh girl, lead me into your darkness...
When this world is trying its hardest to leave me unimpressed,
Just one caress...
From you and I'm blessed (*)*

The more we danced, the more I forgot the passing of time. The whole world had disappeared, except you, my lady-love. Oh, what a hold you had over me! And I loved you, even if my instinct yelled at me to flee, to run away from you, to run away from the charming and unwholesome darkness that emanated from you. But I couldn't. Everything in you attracted me; the ghostly pallor of your skin, the supernatural depth of your eyes, your mesmerizing eyes, and your ability to take possession of my mind. A sweet caress of your hand on my cheek took me out of my daydream.

"Let me guide you, abandon yourself," you whispered in my ear.

I couldn't struggle, my body didn't belong to me anymore. Slowly, you put your head on my shoulder and licked my neck. This sensual contact electrified me.

I understood what would happen to me. I had always known it, because there was no other explanation to this darkness, to all of these mysteries that surrounded you. Being with you was forbidden. It was bad. You were evil. And you wanted me to become so, too. I felt it when you bit me. I wasn't afraid, I'd never been a saint, anyway. Make me become your creature. I've always preferred the pale glow of the moon to the brightness of the sun.

*I'm shying from the light,
I've always loved the night,
And now you offer me eternal darkness.
I have to believe that sin can make a better man,
Or it's the mood, that I am in
That's left us back where we began. (*)*

I was totally given over to your pleasure, lady-love. I was going to become like you, I think. I was living the best moment of my life, while I felt your fangs stuck in my neck.

We were still dancing to the rhythm of music. Music that I had forgotten until now. A thrill ran down my back. While the music and the time passed, my life escaped from my body. And you, you were delighting in my life force, in my blood. If you didn't stop, you would kill me. But it was exactly what you wanted, right? I was so euphoric that I could no longer protest. Vampire Kiss. I was going to die, to fall into eternal darkness.

You drew me into a trap. And I had fallen into it. I heard my blood flow down your throat, each sip brought me closer to hell. The same hell that was in your eyes.

"Thank you for a ..."

The sound of a neck breaking rang out.

"You were delicious... But you talked you much, *darling*."

(*) Lyrics of the song *One Caress* by Depeche mode.

The little Train by Mirann Guillemot-Le Guen



The Shinwell family had moved to Herblay two years before and had left England to farm in France.

They lived in the countryside; mother, father and son. They were far away from everything. Life was common and basic. He was only ten, and the son's only pastimes were gardening or running across fields. Every day was spare time, even if he had to help his father with the flock. They liked this life in the countryside

because they lived there quietly. It sounds idyllic, doesn't it? They could almost feel the rays of sunlight on their skin and smell the spring flowers. The only sound was the train that rang out from time to time.

But mother said one day, "You know Salomon, under current circumstances, things will change...", a solemn air on her face, looking down. The young boy was astounded by the ease with which she hit him with this sentence. What was she saying? All of his thinking was disordered, he never thought that he could live anywhere else.

Some days later, they asked him to pack his bags. He looked at his mother who was looking at the floor. Seeing as nobody said anything, he dared not say anything and put his things away.

On D-Day, he was gathered with some of his comrades. He immediately noticed that Natasha and Samuel were there. They were driven to the railway station. During the trip, Salomon asked why there were just young people but the ticket inspector just answered that they were "government priority". He put the one-way ticket back in his pocket, just near the coloured note that mother had given him for the entrance. Which entrance? He didn't know.

The wagon was filling up, and the children began to suffocate. The train was not stopping any more, but it was already crowded. It was night-time and they were exhausted; it became difficult to stand. Salomon who up to that point had said nothing and acted as if he understood the situation, couldn't handle it anymore and questioned his friends.

'Tell me, Nat and Sam, did your parents tell you anything?' he asked. 'One explanation?'

'No, just that it was the best solution and the fact is they didn't really have a choice,' she said, looking sorry for herself.

'I think they...' began Samuel with a quivering voice.

'No,' said Natasha curtly. 'They didn't abandon us, I'm sure.'

This possibility prevented them from carrying on the discussion. And they were hunched together. We could just hear Samuel bursting into tears. Their toes were freezing, and they began to resign themselves. Why were they driving to an unknown place, without a word, and

just a few people from village? What was so different about them? They heard talk of some violence under the new regime, but there was certainly no link ...

The train stopped, a man all dressed in black asked the children to get out and queue up, with a strict and authoritarian voice. Salomon gave a sidelong look to his two friends and felt a shiver all along his spine.

The worrying man stood up rigidly in front of them, and introduced himself as the director of St-Louis de Gonzague, a Jesuit school which had accepted to teach the children of poor people who couldn't afford a private school.

Salomon and his comrades were the first ones to benefit from an education for lower class children from isolated countryside areas.

Behind the Window by Mona Quemeneur



It was a sunny day and Charlie was walking ahead of her father - glad to feel a scrap of independence at her young age - before she stopped in front of a window. Charlie was pretty small, but tall enough to see what was behind this window. She bounced back to her father, all excited.

"Oh, Dad! Look, look what I've found!"

The father came closer to the pane where his daughter was pointing at something in the distance.

"What is that, Dad? Who are they?"

"Oh, my God, Charlie!" he cried taking his daughter away and himself away from the window.

Both of them were now kneeling on the floor. Andrew was holding Charlie really hard. They did not make a sound for several minutes, waiting for "the danger" to pass. The father raised himself up carefully. He whispered:

"Are they gone now? Yes, it seems to..."

Charlie didn't dare to move.

"Come on, my dear," he smiled slightly and offered his hand. "I must explain a few things to you".

Charlie took his hand, but did not say a word.

"You see, this group of people; you asked me to tell you who they are... Well, they are not... normal people, you understand? They don't see the world as we do. They are mad people. That's why they are behind the window, it's to protect us from them. You mustn't approach this window anymore, OK? And if one day you see another loon like this, you don't approach him either, OK?" explained Andrew. "They are unpredictable," he added, but Charlie remained mute.

He added again "I'm sorry if I surprised you, but it could have been dangerous you know... I took fright for you... thank God there was the window."

"And... have we tried to cure them?" asked Charlie after a moment.

"I think that the people on the other side..." explained the father by showing the window "...try to help them actually, but I am not sure if they can be treated or not."

"That's terrible." she sighed. "They don't even look sick."

Then, Andrew launched into a long speech to explain to his little girl that you could look healthy on the outside and be totally nuts on the inside, and that's why she would have to be really careful when she grew up and when her lovely dad would not be there anymore to protect her, because sometimes she would trust people who would not be worth it and could hurt her, and she was daddy's little treasure and nobody had the right to hurt daddy's little treasure.

On the other side of the window, Doctor Gerritsen and the rest of the medical staff were taking notes.

“You see?” declared the doctor “They don't live in the same world as us. That's why it's better to keep them inside. They can't adapt themselves to the life outside our mental institution.”

“Do you think they are aware of their mental illness, Dc Gerritsen?”

“Of course not. In their minds, we are the crazy ones.”

Calculating Love by Viviane Derrien

This is the short-story of a complex Cal and a simple Lucy. They were so different those two. In fact, they were diametrical and paradoxical. However, "Opposites attract!" they would say; that was their mantra. They tried as hard as they could to prove it. Nonetheless, in the end, though sad, but true, it wasn't the case. This (somewhat) detail may appear as an anticipation, just wait till you get the whole story.

First, let's have a few facts about the two partners. You see, Cal was always so blue and cold. His oddest personality trait was that he had crazy cravings for counting. His lust for numbers was all that he could talk about. Eventually, it seemed as if it was all he was composed of. He could be interesting. But only for a short amount of time. Or, one would go bonkers. Luckily his battery wore out after a while. On the one hand that meant you could finally have a break. On the other hand, you could get frustrated because it was never at the right moment. Especially, if you are like Lucy; that means you're one of the short-tempered kind. Since he was hot-headed and narrow-minded. His favorite words were "denied", and "error". He said anyone and everyone pushed his buttons. Yet, not to be childish, he was always looking for it. If you know the saying "Mess with the bull, you get the horns!", then that's the expression you would use to defend Lucy. Finally, he was a pure scientific type, full of reason and a wretched stick in the mud. Despite his dullness and squareness and all the flaws you have noticed, she was head over heels in love with him.

As for Lucy, she was a person of words not numbers. She did like math, let's just say it wasn't reciprocated. For math and her made 3. She was so open-minded and lost on her cloud, that she could appear a mess to Cal. Even if she was on Cloud Nine. Furthermore, she loved reading and traveling to places and times only books could offer. She also loved Art in general; music, painting, drawing and so on. She was a very sensitive person, full of empathy and warmth to spread. She loved symbolism and embroidered a heart on her sleeves.

She appreciated Cal because he was down to earth and she felt she needed a little reason in her life. As for him, she brought a bubbly touch and a sort of escape from his world full of crazy rules. In some weird, unexplainable way they completed each other. She loved learning things so she tried to learn the very reasoned basic language of math.

If one tells the story of their relationship, one must start at the beginning. So, here we go. At first, it was as simple as math in middle school or even primary. It was $1+1 = 2$. They would quarrel about minor problems that added up would, through team work, subtract each other. Finally, they would be cancelled out. Some would multiply yet, quickly be divided and crumble down to nothingness. It would never happen that a problem became negative, it always ended positively. The issues grew, some were completely unrealistic and complete pabulum. Couples issues. However, somehow, they always managed to get through it. She made an effort to be up to his standards and to follow his rules.

The real trouble came when they exchanged about letters. He would make remarks on every single one of her letters. He would also go on and on about X. She was so perfect, so mysterious and of Arabic origins. No one could pronounce her full name it was some eccentric

“sh” sound, or something of that sort. He explained once how had he met her, in a math class. That was before they also had the same physics class and a chemical reaction happened. Lucy feared he was cheating but he said he was simply trying to help X. He was always looking for her.

They grew apart. It was as if the language barrier that separated them became as impressive as the Great Wall of China. Furthermore, he would compare her to X. First, it was identity-wise. Afterward, He would go on about her body shape. Lucy was an upside-down Y shape. Whereas, X had the ideal hour shape figure. The kind of curves anyone envied and made you self-conscious about your body. Basically, X was perfect.

Their problems soon mutated into unsolvable equations. Her recurring thoughts were like a small goldfish in a suffocating tank; “I won't be as superb as X, I won't ever have the Ideal looks... And so on. At first, they were already an on / off couple. As time passed it worsened. She fought to keep the relationship from sinking, he didn't. If only she could see that they were a flawed couple, that they no longer fit like two pieces of a puzzle. If only she could see how poisonous they were for each other. That even if she wanted to identify the solution to each equation, it was impossible. It was a tough goal to reach.

Whether it was a simple syntax error in a program, or a troublesome subject there would always be one way: push the exit button. Nonetheless, somehow, they would make up and start over. They even kept some problems in this memory box which I still can't understand till this day. They said it helped to fix future issues. They never did quite understand the “square” root of their problems.

His answer was always the past and this became tedious in the long run. Then one day, after long reflections, and endless statistics, Cal had a silicon chip switched to overload. They ended it there.

I forgot a small detail that is essential to comprehend this story. Cal is short for Calculator.