

# Snot Lake

From "Snot Lake" A collection of short stories

*Tall Tales from Michigan and Beyond*  
By Len Kirschner

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Abstract (short overview)

An unemployed English teacher lands a job at a high school in Snot Lake an unincorporated area outside the borders of Owosso in Shiawassee County Michigan. A shake up at the Owosso Police department leaves a position open for a disgruntled Officer who knows a Judge who knows the Governor and a cat who hides within the walls of the local school. Can a muscle car bring true love? September is the best month in Michigan.

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Signed: Len Kirschner  
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**Snot Lake**  
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Obviously he couldn't take his eyes off the three young girls. All three were bouncing themselves down the sidewalk past the Toothpick Bar and Grill. What stood out in his mind wasn't the fact that each had a different shade of hair but the words “**WEAR OUT THE TROJANS**” stitched on their black and red hoodies. “What kind of a place is this, what if I have these girl's in class?” He pulled up in front of the somewhat small café half of the Bar and Grill and walked inside. The menu was laminated with the cover simply saying

TOOTHPICK BAR AND GRILL

Snot Lake, Michigan

*Home of the Black Flies*

He unfolded it.

“If you want coffee I suggest you go to Foster's in Owosso,” the server seemed disagreeable as she waited with her left hand on her left hip. He looked up. “You have no coffee here?” “Nobody wants it. Foster's is better,” she said. “Do they serve breakfast too?” he said ready to leave. “We serve breakfast here what do you want?” “Right off I want coffee even if it is inferior.” “I'll make a fresh pot. Nobody wants it. They all get their coffee at Foster's,” she put her pen above her ear as she walked back to the kitchen. She could have been a librarian if she cleaned up her attitude.

After about five minutes she came back with a cup. “What's the story behind the name?” he asked. She took a deep sign and said “Well that happened about five years ago when the high school opened. The new principal was from the University of Pennsylvania, which he called UP, which always had to be followed up by specifically saying the University of Pennsylvania. He had a thing about the mascot of the sports teams being called the Fighting Quakers and wanted the new sports mascot to put fear in

the hearts of the opponent. That's why he picked the Black Flies. Nothing else that small is so irritating except maybe bacteria I suppose. We don't have any toothpicks either," she threw in.

"We do have a forest. That's down the road a bit across from the high school. Years ago two parcels were cleared by the same timber company and only one was replanted. Imagine that. The trees were planted too close together and grew as thin as toothpicks. So we all call it Toothpick Forest. The other area is Bare Mountain not that it's a mountain or anything but the guy skipped town without replanting so it's bald compared to the other.

You look new in here. What brings you to town?" "I am the new English teacher." "You came just in time for the big football game," she sarcastically commented. "I'm not a big sports fan. I'm not even a small sports fan. Give me the Denver Omelet." "I'll have it out in a few minutes. Go Black Flies," pencil above the ear again. "Yeah, Go Black Flies," he said.

He sat and stared at the creamer curdling on top of the coffee. She was right, the coffee was terrible.

Meanwhile, in Owosso, Officer Ryan Lee had his feet on his desk. He wouldn't have done this a few months ago for he wouldn't have had a desk and more importantly he would have had his old boots with the hole in the sole that he never would have displayed.

After hiring an attorney he had sued the police department for bullying, harassment and a number of other charges. He was lucky for once and won and now he had his adversary fired, had a new position, a desk, a squad car for his use and was flipping through his cell phone in search of buying his first personal car, something he never would have imagined he could ever do on his own.

It had to be an American muscle car that's one thing he knew for sure. Captain Danville told him he should first learn how to do a budget but Ryan Lee was planning on doing that after he had the car. "You still can look at that Dodge Charger you know. My son still has it." "No thanks Captain. It's not

loud enough.” As he often did Captain Danville shook his head and walked away.

Officer Ryan Lee liked loud. Loud was a good description for the man who last year changed his life. Bill Whitmore was a 66<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court Judge. Some say he got the name “Sitting Bill” when he petitioned the legislature to allow him to serve not only as a district court judge but as a temporary sitting Circuit Court Judge. It was a scheme to save money for the county and made it so that Sitting Bill could refer his lower cases to the appellate court where he would rule on them again. Some said this was illegal but somehow he pulled it off saying “this is Michigan we can do whatever we want. Cutting the budget-two for the price of one.” He had the backing of the Governor and that’s all he needed.

Some others say it was when he took to the mobility scooter that Sitting Bill really got the name. One day they saw the Judge coming down the street in Corunna to the courthouse on the scooter. He gave no reason. He had no visible disability. Right about that time he began the habit of having multiple recesses during court hearings where he would ride the scooter outside and have what could be called a smoke break. He was known to suck down one cigarette while staring into space and then immediately follow it with another. This is where he met Officer Ryan Lee who joined him outside during a recess during his hearing.

Not a word had been spoken. Officer Ryan and Sitting Bill were very much focused on the job of making their cigarettes shorter. Then without warning Sitting Bill said “there is no telling about people these days. When I was young you could piss in a creek and no one cared. These days everyone gets all bent out of shape over everything.” Officer Ryan perked up immediately, “I know exactly what you mean.”

It was right then that the two formed a bond. “I know the governor feels the same way. People griping about lead pipes and nonsense-it gets annoying. Let’s go back in.” The Judge went first and Officer Ryan stayed out a few seconds longer to wash away the nicotine taste with a Mountain Dew.

His mind drifted away from the court case and was engrossed in the new Zero Mountain Dew that was being advertised these days. “No calories in a Mountain Dew-a clear sign that the country was going to hell,” he concluded. He then contributed his cigarette butt to nature and went back inside.

Ryan had filed a formal complaint with his employer the Owosso Police department and they in turn started a Fact Internal Investigation on the harassment charged to a fellow officer. Ryan had documented evidence on his cell phone but mysteriously that phone was stolen while he was at work. It was never recovered. With no action pending Officer Ryan took the matter to District Court to pursue damages and that is where he first met Sitting Bill.

With attorneys from the Michigan Legal Center pleading his case Sitting Bill heard of his hardship when Officer Ryan was fired on a family egg farm in the State of Washington and sided with him on the unfairness of having a different standard of expectations for kinfolk that put all the work on him and all the reward to the family. “Standard Nepotism,” he called it.

Sitting Bill kicked it up to the appellate court where he continued to sit as the temporary Circuit Court Judge and ruled in favor of Officer Ryan Lee finding one Officer Jones Johnson guilty of ignoring “the rights and dignity of his co-worker with justice and fairness and failing to live up to the highest standards of conduct on and off duty.”

The police department itself was warned that it had failed to maintain leadership coordination and delivery of the public trust in its handling of the case. Officer Ryan Lee was awarded \$25,000, employee J. Johnson was terminated and the department was encouraged to improve hiring practices that vet for tendencies for bullying and harassment. “You should be able to sense that in the initial interview,” Sitting Bill said.

That was last year and now Officer Ryan was sipping a bottle of Mountain Dew with his feet on his desk trying to find a car he could afford seeing how he had already spent almost all his award money. He stopped looking for low mileage and was just concentrating of a car that he thought would be loud.

The English Teacher pulled into the parking lot of Snot Lake High School. Under the school name read **Home of the Black Flies** and on the front of the school was a massive red, black and white poster that read **ROLL THE TROJANS**. He stopped the car and turned off the engine. He spent the next few minutes reassessing if he really wanted to teach after all.

Visitors first check in at the main office so he did. Getting the room number he carried his supplies to room #12A opened the door and walked in. He fell into the chair behind a beautiful rosewood desk which had been labeled with white tape and now all the tape was removed but not the glue leaving a sticky residue in over thirty locations.

The school itself had only 24 rooms yet was built in two stories with a dozen rooms up and down. The teacher's office was so small it was passable as a walk in closet with the desk the dominant feature. Searching through the drawers were papers on the pros and cons of Stadium Seating, Modified U seating, Group Seating and Combination Seating. When he searched the center pull out drawer he found a note.

*I assume you are the new English Teacher. I wanted you to know that I have enjoyed working with these kids even though over half of the class is on probation. They are good kids they just take the idea of having fun a bit too far.*

*You will find a box with a supply of bags of Fritos in the northeast corner of the room. I had a cat named People's who chased a mouse behind the wall. The cat refuses to come out. It has been over a month.*

*I decided to put cat food out by the crack in the wall but that didn't leer him out. In the morning the Fritos I leave out instead of cat food is usually gone. I once fed People's, that's his name; cantaloupe and he seemed to like it. You will have to get some. There is nothing in the small refrigerator but like I said there is Fritos in the northeast corner. No matter what I tried People's would not come out. I guess he's your cat now. Please treat him well.*

*Stanley Wickwalker  
Bolinás, Calif.*

The English teacher returned to the main office to inquire about the cat. “Do you know anything about this cat that I’ve inherited?” He was holding the letter.” “Oh that cat does that. He is in places that are inaccessible to anyone but a cat or mouse. Stanley found the cat in a food co-op in California. He said it will come out and eat at night. The cat eats vegetables too. Would come out at night and eat cantaloupe right off the display. The health department was never privy to that information from what Stanley said.” The office secretary looked as if she had just stopped in during a run and closed the office door as she left. The English Teacher shuffled back to his new office.

It was quiet but as fate would have it his privacy was broken by a wavy haired blonde woman sticking her head in the office door. “Hey, you’re the new guy. I’m Laura Saunders . I’m the sanitation engineer. You know the janitor, custodian. You take care of that cat situation? I sure hope so. Not a nice problem to leave you with on your first day and all.” He looked up slowly. She seemed to have a look in her eyes that he had only seen in street people, kind of glazed over with high anxiety. “I’ve always wanted to be a teacher but I have a felony. I home schooled my kids. They turned out all right I think although I haven’t seen one of them for about twelve years. Seating charts? You know you could keep them in cages. You probably would have less trouble if you did. I’m sure the parents understand that by now.” “What’s the felony for?” he asked. She rolled her eyes much the way a crow would when a car is approaching forcing the bird to leave its road kill. She left the office without another word.

Officer Ryan pulled his squad car into the Slingerland Value Lot. The salesman was waving for him not to turn in the driveway because it was an exit but once he was in Ryan felt no need to go back out and turn in another driveway just to wind up in the same place, besides he’s a cop. “I’m looking for a muscle car.” “Well the closest thing we have today is a 15 Dodge Dart,” the salesman pointed toward the lot. Officer Ryan nodded and returned to the squad car.

Pulling into the Chrysler lot was easier although they offered nothing even close. "I think you are looking for a collector's car," was all they could add to his dilemma. With a complete absence of business their lot was much easier to navigate.

Officer Ryan spent the next hour at Benny's eating a large quantity of donuts and searching on his cell phone for his dream car. All time seemed to pass and he did not receive a call to do anything else but picture himself motoring for a weekend in Flint or even further with people looking at the car saying "awesome car," "like your car," "that's a beauty," and things like that.

The English teacher heard something being dragged down the hall. He assumed it was the unsettling sanitation engineer until he saw a rainbow of hair color pass by the office window. He reluctantly rose and went to the door. "Recycling?" "They said I could have these," the Rainbow kid said. "Are you recycling?" he repeated. The rainbow kid just looked at the ground as if searching for the next word to say. "What's your name?" "Dalton. I only take the plastic bottles." "So you're not recycling." "They said I could have them." "Who are they?" "My teachers."

The English teacher knew at that point that the kid probably knew what he was doing and didn't want to talk about it with a stranger. The English Teacher walked back to his desk to figure out the seating arrangements for Monday's class. He couldn't decipher what method Stanley Wickwalker had used other than moving the desks around to clean the floor which he assumed was done by the wavy haired lady janitor and not Wickwalker at all.

The high school cafeteria had its vending machines restocked with junk food on Sundays which was when the English Teacher found the cafeteria. He was more interested in some kind of a trail bar but had to settle for some imitation cheese crunch noodle which left an orange substance on his fingers. Looking at the seating charts again he wiped the orange cheese off his fingers

onto his pants. He received a text stating that there would be a 7AM all-teachers meeting on reviewing security measures for Friday's host football game against Owosso. *Due to numerous complaints and subsequent arrests of members of our student body we wish to take every measure to ensure that Snot Lake High School will be hosting a family-friendly event free of any of the objectionable lack of sportsmanship that was exhibited last year...we will be attempting to reduce litter. Currently we have just completed printing 500 yard signs and will be adding a flap attachment under our entering Snot Lake signs that will read*

**NEVER LET IT BE SAID THAT SNOT LAKE WAS CLEAN BEFORE YOU CAME.**

The English teacher put his cell phone away and tried to enjoy the coffee he had bought out of the vending machine. It was difficult.

Dalton never liked math, only science, but he did count out thirty-six plastic liter bottles and lined them on the floor in the basement. He then took a hunting knife that he borrowed from his father and began to cut the tops off about half way down each bottle. Dalton's father was upstairs watching NASCAR previews and his older brother had six kids that he was babysitting in the backyard. "When are you going to clean up the yard?" the old man said out the window. "Wednesday." "Why not today?" "Wednesday. I need to do it Wednesday." The older brother had a thing for divorced women with kids and he was watching both his current and past girlfriend's kids while they worked or said they were working. With six kids his hands were full. "You sure know how to handle Dad" he said.

After what seemed like forever Dalton took all of the bottoms of the bottles and brought them outside where he decorated them with black spray paint. He stayed there to watch the black paint dry on the plastic bottles. "Are you going to clean up the back yard?" the old man now clutching a Budweiser asked again from the window. "Wednesday," Dalton answered again. "You sure have his number," the older brother said.

Driving the squad car through town Ryan noticed how many brake lights he saw from people slowing down once they saw him through the rear view mirror. He appreciated his new found power that seemed to come from only his presence on the street. His first stop was in Flint to see a 1964 Pontiac Gran Turismo Omologato most commonly called GTO. The \$69,000 price tag would be something he would have to work out. Being in uniform there was no reluctance on the part of the salesman to put him in the driver's seat for a test drive. He had the option of roof up or down. He pulled out of the dealership parking lot with top down and the wind humming past his ears.

On the road he could feel the 389 horses propelling him out of town on highway 69. "This will make up for my walking days," he thought.. The price was the only sticking part. Maybe Captain Danville was right about figuring out how to do a budget first. Officer Ryan told the salesman he would figure something out while having no idea how he would do that which was his standard operating procedure. "It's hard to find a convertible in this condition," the salesman gave him his card and threw in "have a nice day," as Ryan returned to the squad car.

The English teacher had never seen a group of people with such grim faces. They all settled into the cafeteria. He took a table by himself and was quickly joined by a talkative young lady. "I'm Biology," she said. He nodded and added "English," giving a faint smile. Last year's rivalry game was the topic and how things got out of hand and how they could have stopped much of the activity by having proper planning beforehand. The meeting was a combination of the Captain from the police department and school administrators taking turns giving their spiel on how best to control the negative element in the student body. There were many yawns and eventually some vending machine coffee was in the hands of the beleaguered staff.

At daybreak on Wednesday morning Dalton took to the backyard with two large trash bags. He returned to the basement and then brought out two more garbage bags filled with the newly spray painted black bottoms of the liter plastic bottles. Each bottle had seven floppy slits cut about the quarter of the

way up about one inch in length. Dalton kept a quality control requirement on these numbers and lengths. These would function as the door. The morning was slightly cool but the afternoon was predicted to heat up to about 70 degrees which fit his purpose to a tee.

Dalton's father nursed a cup of coffee on the back porch and looked disapprovingly at Dalton taking the initiative to clean up the yard. "Hey, I asked you to clean it up not play with it." Dalton did not respond. "As long as it gets done" his father said as he walked his coffee back inside flipping on the television on the way to the recliner. The family dog just seemed startled that anything in his backyard was being changed.

Dalton searched for the freshest and more spreadable dog manure and placed those samples in the bottom floor of each of the plastic containers. Manure is manure and he wasn't about to go look for a horse or a cow. Although Snot Lake was once farmland it now produced very little of its historic past. Dalton thought he might have more manure if he would have owned a bigger dog but he loved the dog he had and this amount of manure would have to do. The dog found time to drop a new stool in the corner by the bushes and Dalton scraped that up without hesitation. He grabbed a shovel and put the older, unspreadable stools into a separate garbage bag and tied those shut. He brought out the tops of the liter bottles and placed them back over the bottom sections that were now loaded and lined them up around the garbage cans which were always kept outside and often uncovered being the epicenter of the black fly population on the property.

Officer Ryan pulled into the Wal-Mart Supercenter, his favorite place, and went and scored a few liter bottles of Mountain Dew, his favorite liquid. He kept thinking of the 69 thousand dollars on that GTO. He thought of how well a muscle car would run if it used Mountain Dew instead of petroleum. Adjusting his glasses he stood before the employee bulletin board an assemblage of used car ads. In Owosso that mean about five. One caught his eye.

*1995 Pontiac Firebird Trans-Am*

*52K Miles \$17,500 firm*

*Black*

*Will Sell on Contract Call C.S. at (982) 447-1477*

He made arrangements to swing by on Thursday morning during his shift. Being recently paid he could either eat donuts at Benny's or a full meal at the Toothpick which was a bit further drive but not much. He played with the idea of breakfast and on Thursday morning he was at the Toothpick at opening time for Steak and eggs with home fries toast and jelly. The cook had to search for a loaf of white bread for the toast. It was a first serving Mountain Dew to someone for breakfast but this was Snot Lake and people here had very unique tastes. It wasn't the first request ever for white bread. The cook knew the age of the loaf was something best kept secret.

It was about nine in the morning when Officer Ryan walked up the stairs and knocked on the white wooded screen door. Cora Lee Spillman came to the door wearing a thin translucent sundress on that warm September day. Her body was like a blueprint in its shadows. She had been quite pleasant when he had called. He had noticed a southern accent with a bit of twang in it. It had just turned fall on the calendar but Cora Lee lived in the moment and the moment called for the feel of bare feet on the ground and not much more. The door opened and Officer Ryan had a sudden interest in engineering.

She threw back her hair and walked to the wooden garage and opened the door. There stood the Trans-Am. Officer Ryan tried to act as if he was interested in the car but it was a dead giveaway that he was more interested in her. "Test drive?" her smile was infectious. "Sure." "I'll back it out." It was louder than the Dodge Dart would have been.

They took the car to St. Louis, not the one in Missouri but the one in Michigan. He wanted to floor it but he also wanted to keep her relaxed enough to spend time with her so they casually made the square back to St. Charles and then back to the white garage in Owosso. He asked every car question he could think of. After she closed the door she looked at him with a squinted eye

and said “I can sell on contract.” He didn’t have an answer so she threw in “I used to have a Prius but this is more fun.” “It’s a great car,” he was finally able to add. “Let’s work something out,” she smiled not knowing Officer Ryan misinterpreted the meaning. They walked into the house.

Officer Ryan dropped the squad car at the precinct and walked back to get the Trans-Am. He felt as if he signed his life away but he never really thought he had one to begin with. It was the first time anyone had ever given him credit for anything. He wanted to invite himself for supper but he didn’t quite know how to arrange the words. It would take more breath than he had for she had taken his breath away. He was deeply moved emotionally and physically and knew he had to see her again. He spent the rest of the night trying to figure out how to win her heart. Most of what he was thinking he kept to himself which is probably better for us all.

On Friday Dalton awoke before dawn. He put his clothes on as if they were fatigues because they were fatigues. He put his boots on. He didn’t shower because he didn’t want this rainbow hair coloring to fade and besides he just didn’t feel like it. He knocked on the door of his older brother’s bedroom then picked up the car keys on the night stand and went to his brother’s car opened the trunk and started loading up the trunk with garbage bags of black and white plastic bottles. His brother grabbed an energy drink and came down stairs. “You sure you want to do this?” It was Dalton’s style not to answer so silence telegraphed a yes. The trunk was closed and the car started rolling towards Owosso.

The English teacher was anticipating that game day would be different from the other school days at Snot Lake High School. He was surprised that it wasn’t. The same old students engrossed in their cell phones under the tables and hardly anyone with even a bad answer for the week’s reading assignment of *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy. One of the more popular, as he called them early development girls, asked if Hardy was one of the Hardy Boys. The English teacher was amazed that the girl had even heard of the Hardy Boys.

The football players were required to attend class in white shirt and tie, a

tradition on game day, and most of them obliged. This was a home game and the staff had double duties of being educators and security. The build up to this meaningless activity was something the English teacher would never understand. When he returned to the office he noticed something he had never seen before. It was People's licking on the cantaloupe that had been left in the cat dish.

Pretending to ignore the green and white cat he held up the morning's copy of the Argus-Press with the history of the "big game" as the headline story. It seems Joseph Wampler drove a project to make Snot Lake a citizen's country club. Wampler was a descendent of a U.S. government employee of the same name who surveyed the area for the U.S. Land Office in 1822. Wamplet, thinking Snot Lake would become a city of its own and not the shadow of Owosso that it had become, had sand imported from the beaches of Lake Michigan, ordered picnic tables, construction of a Tent Village Canteen area, purchased galvanized six person pedal boats, clear bottom kayaks and a half dozen venetian gondolas that could be used for free after paying the entrance fee.

With a grant from Great Lakes Central Railroad and a substantial gift from the Woodard Casket Company Wampler was off and running to establish his vacation Mecca. Within a few months his excitement diminished when he became aware of complaints about "outsiders" using all of the lake's recreation boats.

His first step was to blame the "outsiders" for every problem the lake had starting with trash. Knowing most of the "outsiders" were the good citizens of Owosso he had the crew manufacture just under one hundred signs and he placed them all around the lake and at the entrance.

His favorite was **NEVER LET IT BE SAID THAT SNOT LAKE WAS CLEAN BEFORE YOU CAME!**

After hours some pranksters from Owosso snuck in and were using the trampolines after putting their coats and shoes under the trampoline as to not be detected. The Tent Village Green shirts, the camp counselor security force,

were not fooled because that is what they did after hours themselves and the Owosso youth were easily apprehended in the act.

In a retaliatory move Wampler decided to have Snot Lake Citizen Cards printed up for the locals which would be required for entrance to Snot Lake. This met with fierce opposition from a judge from Owosso, "Sitting Bill" Whitmore, who knew the Governor well enough that the Governor placed a phone call to Wampler who was rumored to have thrown the phone to the floor and jumped up and down on it with his substantial weight causing the phone to break into various pieces. The following day he received a certified letter from the Governor and he had the staff photographer take a picture of him jumping up and down on the letter.

Wampler made the decision to dismantle the picnic tables, the trampolines, the galvanized six person pedal boats, clear bottom kayaks and a half dozen venetian gondolas as well as stopping all further construction of a Tent Village canteen area which would be used as a food service area as well as being a night spot for movies and teen dances with live bands or D.J's.

Going even farther he had enough grant money remaining to have county trucks pick up and deliver the imported sand back to the beaches of Lake Michigan. The story that they dropped the Snot Lake sand in one spot which eventually became Sleeping Bear Sand Dunes is incorrect by all accounts. All that was left standing were swing sets with no swings and no slides.

This is how the rivalry between the two high schools began. The English Teacher thought about attempting to pet People's but he decided not to push the issue.

The car barely made a sound as it rolled away from the front of the high school in Owosso. The streetlights were the only thing illuminating the street. It had been the night of a new moon. Dalton took the tops of all six garbage bags and twisted them into one and walked directly up and through the front door of the school dragging the bags behind him. Coming down the hall was a

night worker still on shift and Dalton said one word “halftime.” He proceeded to walk past and right towards the girl’s locker room which was his destination.

That very morning Officer Ryan awoke early. He had been having convertible dreams only in the convertible was Cora Lee. What woman wouldn’t want to ride next to him in a convertible? She seemed so happy and content in his dreams and when he had bought the Trans-Am she treated him like family. She must have sold him the car on contract because she really wanted to help him. She really wanted to be a part of his life. It wouldn’t take too long to get to Flint after all the Trans-Am was no slug of a ride. He only hoped that he wouldn’t get pulled over in Corunna. Other than that he knew there would be no patrol car out.

Dalton heard sounds of girls in the swimming pool which was beyond the locker room which appeared to be empty. He thought about going swimming in the Shiawassee later when it warmed up but then he remembered what that would do to his hair colouring.

He dumped the plastic bottles in front of the shower stalls. He questioned why girls had partitions and the boy’s locker room did not. He scratched the blue part of his head. One by one he unscrewed the tops and rolled the bottles to the opposite side of the room. He worked fast but the five minutes this took seemed like five hours.

The black flies had been clinging to the light at the top of the bottles but with the caps removed they came out. One by one they filled the locker room with their buzzing and darting from corner to corner.

Dalton put all of the garbage bags in one bag and crumpled that bag pushing it into his front pocket. He lowered his eyes and walked with a business like expression of his face without a hall pass through Owosso High School and out the front door.

The English Teacher was more intrigued with People’s the cat than with the newspaper. He moved close to the cat and ever so slowly picked the cat up and hugged him much the way you would hug a football that you did not want to fumble. He spent the next few minutes sitting in his office chair with

People's in his arms until Laura the Sanitation Engineer opened the office door and People's leaped from the arms of the English Teacher sprinting past Laura the Sanitation Engineer and out the door.

Captain Danville was explaining the difference between a good story and a well told story to Officer Ryan. "You are all of a sudden living the high life," Danville said. He was admiring the 1964 G.T.O. now parked on the street. "It's the device for shrinking time and distance. 3,300 pound wide-track Tiger you know. It's the first year of production with 389 horses." Ryan had exhausted all of the talking points that he remembered from the salesman.

"Get over to the high school. Some prankster has a million flies in the girl's locker room. Go take care of it," Officer Ryan slipped out to get a donut at Benny's and waited until his breath slowed down before placing a call to Cora Lee. "I've got a surprise for you." "Who is this?" "It's Ryan, I bought your car." "What is it? I'm kind of busy." "Can I show it to you?" "I suppose. When?" "I'm at Benny's." "Where?" "The donut place." "Well I am home. I'm cooking. I'll be here for awhile." She hung up without saying good-bye. Now right then Officer Ryan should have realized that this might not be a good time to pop a surprise but for the sake of the story he didn't.

The English Teacher and Laura the Sanitation Engineer were on opposite sides of the Toothpick Forest where People's had found refuge between the trees that were so thin that they hardly cast a shadow but thick enough to comfort the fidgety feline. They spoke in their calmest voices, which for Laura the Sanitation Engineer wasn't much different from her most stormy voice. People's seemed to be enjoying being out from behind the wall in the English Teacher's office. He zipped through the Toothpick Forest with all of his pent-up energy.

Ryan pulled in the driveway at Cora Lee's where one day earlier he had sat in the Trans-Am. He knocked and she answered in a cooking apron. He was disappointed that he couldn't see thru it but did not show it. "What's this?" "It's my new car." "You bought two cars?" "No, I used the Trans-Am as a trade in. Look at the miles. This is the original year for GTO." "What?"

Some guys think women look sexier when they are angry, maybe the redness that gets into their face but Ryan thought she just looked terrifying. “You want to go get coffee at the Toothpick?” he asked. “What?” She was just about yelling now. Ryan thought “yes, she is yelling.” “You were buying the car on contract, you haven’t made a payment yet and you trade it in? What’s wrong with you?” “You gave me the title,” he countered. “I thought you wanted to be trusted. How the hell did you ever get to be a police officer?”

“I’m going to call the cops.” She went inside and he followed her to keep her from calling the precinct. After all he was told to take care of flies in a girl’s locker room. She reached for the phone, he reached for her arm, but as she reached for the phone she was also reaching for a steak knife on the kitchen counter. She quickly picked up the knife and pushed it into his flank just under his right rib cage. He pulled away out of the kitchen thinking she was right behind him with the intent not to go on the car ride of his dreams but to do some more stabling.

He jumped into the open roof GTO and laid more rubber going in reverse in this car than he had ever done going forward in any other. Cora Lee pulled open the doors to the white garage and without taking off her apron or putting on a helmet or gloves, hopped on an Aprila SRV 850 superbike that had been hidden in the back of the structure. With 76 horsepower and very little weight she caught the GTO in the residential neighborhood in no time flat.

Officer Ryan heard her screaming words unfit to print. He yelled back “I know the Judge and he knows the Governor.” It was then that he decided to roll the roof shut and to his dismay he remembered the salesman had to guide the roof with his hand. It was right at the moment that Officer Ryan acknowledged that he had bought a used car shortly before People’s darted across the road.

“Stay with me. Are you all right?” The English Teacher asked. Laura the Sanitation Engineer picked up the cat that seemed to become domesticated that instant and was purring in the arms of the wavy haired woman. Officer Ryan quickly twisted his head around to look backwards but there was no sign

of Cora Lee or the superbike or the knife that he was expecting. There were about two dozen trees snapped and the GTO rested between them with the radiator steaming. "You are bleeding from the back. How did that happen?" Laura asked. The English Teacher was still wondering about her felony that kept her from being a teacher. "I'm fine. I'm fine," Ryan repeated. "I'll take care of this later." He then started off on foot to Owosso High School and the flies.

He spent the next few hours at the school which had released early with all the doors open. Some flies left voluntarily out of the doors and others found a new home in the various light fixtures. Walking to the precinct he looked at his squad car and went inside to report to Captain Danville.

Go over to Snot Lake and scour the area for any kid about 5'5" or so with rainbow hair. Officer Ryan kept his back from the sight of the Captain. The wound spot was now a bit bigger red spot on his shirt but not as bad as he had expected. He picked up a towel and placed it on the back rest of the squad car seat. "No one needs to know," he said to himself.

Officer Ryan slowly staggered from the squad car to the new Snot Lake Athletic field and saw Sitting Bill Whitmore maneuvering through the crowd on his mobility scooter. "Elliot Ness how are ya?" "Huh?" Ryan said. "Before your time son. Good to be young. Good to see ya . Go Trojans." Then he was off.

The game started and Officer Ryan glanced up the grandstand looking for the rainbow kid. He saw the English Teacher there holding People's the cat in his lap with a leash and a collar. "You get that taken care of?" the English Teacher asked?" "Oh yeah. Don't worry about it. It's under control." The English teacher asked "Is it always cloudy here?" Three people near the English Teacher answered "It's the Lake Effect."

The English Teacher went back to his new obsession of petting People's the cat, who was multi-tasking as a table for his cell phone. Officer Ryan shuffled on looking up at the crowd for a rainbow kid.

The football game, or lack of one, had the majority of the spectators playing with their phones. The English teacher following suit and found more

interest in picking his birthstone to reveal his yearly prediction after becoming totally frustrated with the pop up advertising on a game he never learned the name of because it never loaded. This was before the lights went out. The lights went out. People stayed in their seats for the next ten minutes playing with their phones until an announcement came over the P.A.

The City of Owosso and aligning areas currently have a power outage in the area of M-52 and M-21 affecting 800 residents. Consumers Power is aware of the problem and is working to restore power in a timely manner.

Due to the power outage, the traffic light at M-52 and M-21 is currently not working. Drivers shall treat the intersection as a four-way stop sign.

The back-up generator here at Snot Lake High School, the home of the Black Flies, the crowd erupts, is not strong enough to light the football field so unfortunately tonight's game will be cancelled.

It will not be rescheduled at a later date.

Please leave in an orderly and timely fashion.

If you need assistance vacating the facility a uniformed officer will assist you.

The gates will close in 30 minutes.

All of the cheering stopped. It took almost an hour for people to leave. They just sat lost deep within their phones. It became strangely quiet. The only sounds were coming from conversations of the officials on the football field.

Officer Ryan, not feeling 100%, was happy that no one needed assistance. When the stands had emptied out he used his police issued flashlight to scan the area. His beam of light landed on some rainbow hair.

After a deep sigh and a readjustment of his blood stained shirt Officer Ryan made his way up to the Rainbow boy who was deeply involved in his phone.

"Son, can I sit here?" Dalton nodded. "Son, did you have a good day today?" "Hm Hmm," Dalton murmured.

"Do you have any water in your backpack?" Dalton produced his drink bottle thinking the policeman needed a drink. "Pour it out Son." Dalton, looking up for the first time with a questioning look on his face poured the remaining water on the grandstand walkway. Officer Ryan pulled out a liter bottle of Mountain Dew and filled up Dalton's drink bottle. Handing it back to him he said "Son, we have to talk." "You know anything about cars? I want to rebuild a wrecked classic and leave the muffler off. Dalton looked up and said "For Real?"

*Dear People of Snot Lake and areas nearby:*

I know that life is difficult. We don't choose our parents and where we start in this journey of life but some of what you may want to forget can be included in a recipe of the other things that other people want to forget and if I put these things together I may be able to give you something you will want to remember.

March 7, 2020

Astoria, Oregon

Never let it be said that Snot Lake was Clean before You came