Jimmy was late. Again. I was getting tired of waiting, but if I left now that meant I’d have to pay for dinner. The steps were too damp and cold to sit on so I hopped up and down, taking shelter in the alcove. Finally I could see Jimmy bopping up and down in the distance on his bike. He wasn’t wearing a helmet. What an idiot. He slapped me on the back and handed me a box while he chained up his two-speed.

“What’cha get?”

“Anchovies and pepperoni.” He stuck out his tongue. “It’s the only mistake they made today. But tips were good.” He kept picking at an ingrown hair he had on his chin

“Let’s go in.”

Jimmy’s apartment smelled like wet leather. I couldn’t identify the smell. Marne was bundled up in a sunken armchair by the window. I wanted to pull her puckered skin. Instead I just said, “Hi Marne. Whatcha lookin at?”

She didn’t respond. Jimmy turned on a light and opened the pizza box. It was already cold and the cheese congealed over the eyeless fishies.

“Grandma, you want pizza? Anchovies and pepperoni.”

Marne spat in a eucalyptus plant on the windowsill. Then she turned on the television.

“Suit yourself.” Jimmy bit into the cold pizza. I picked out the fish and sucked the salt off of them.

“Meow.”

“C’mon, let’s go to my room.”

“Thanks for dinner Shakespeare.” Marne coughed up something that might have been a laugh.

The back of Jimmy’s neck reddened but he didn’t say anything. I didn’t say anything. Jimmy hated his room because it faced the street. I liked the orange glow of the streetlamps at night. They flickered on right when we walked in.

“I wrote something for class tomorrow. The beginning of a story. I want you to read it first.”

“What’s it about?”

“It’s Medieval. I read *Hamlet*. Like you recommended. It was inspiring.”

“Did you understand it?” That was condescending. “Did you like it, I mean.”

“I think so. And yes. Just read and tell me what you think. Be honest.”

He opened up his computer to the waiting document, then fell back on the unmade bed. He kept picking at his face while he kicked off his shoes and stared at the ceiling.

“I’m just trying something new. I’m not a writer.”

“Not yet.”

“You can only deliver pizza for so long.”

“Then what will we eat?”

“Read It! Please.”

“Queen Katherine preferred to go by Kay – “

“Not out loud!”

“Oh. Sorry.”

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Jimmy’s story didn’t make a lot of sense to me. I didn’t tell him that. Maybe it didn’t matter. He was trying something new. I told him to cut out some of the metaphors and not make it so wordy. A crease appeared between his eyebrows as he tried trim down the lengthy paragraphs. I told him it was rambling and I wasn’t sure how he would finish it. Now I was lying on his bed while he edited it.

“What’s the name of a castle walkway? Like the top where you walk around.”

“I don’t know. Look it up.”

Jimmy typed in castle walkway name into a search engine.

“It’s an allure, apparently.” He kept typing.

“I’m going to heat up some pizza. Do you want some?”

“No thanks.” Clack-clack-clack.

Marne was still sitting in the chair watching television.

“Hi Marne, what are you watching?”

This time she turned to me. Her eyes were still a light and pure blue. I had seen pictures of her when she was younger. But now the white part was all yellow. I didn’t like to look for too long. I felt like I was invading her privacy.

“Where’s Jim?”

“Jimmy is writing in his room. He has class tomorrow.”

“Shakespeare. He used to watch TV with me. Now he’s Shakespeare.”

Marne turned back to the television so I took the pizza back to Jimmy’s room. His shoulders were hunched and he didn’t look up when I came in. I stared out the window and saw a dark-skinned girl ride by on a pink bicycle. She almost lost her balance but she didn’t fall.

“Okay. I trimmed it. Will you read it now?”

“Sure. But then I think I should get home. I’m pretty tired.”

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Queen Katherine preferred to go by Kay. It was a more masculine name and she wanted to be taken seriously. There was no King. He had been poisoned. It was an accident.

Katherine was patrolling her castle grounds from the allure. She kept tripping over her soft blue velvet gown. It was not made for the outdoors and kept dragging in the mud. Though she was supposed to be making sure her serfs weren’t misbehaving and were dutifully plowing, she kept getting distracted by the sweat gleaming off of a shirtless stable boy clearing out muck. She was too high up to see his face but she could see the wired muscles on his back and arms. A white horse ran across the stable yard and clambered up the stairs disappearing through the chapel doors.

“I’m a queen. I shouldn’t be thinking of mucking about with stable boys. And where is my pointy hat?”

“Pointy hats are really more for princesses,” said Gertrude.

“You should really wear something more manly. Like a crown. An iron crown,” joined in her twin sister Lilith. Or maybe that one was Gertrude. It was impossible to tell. They looked exactly alike from their small brown childlike hands to their shiny dark hair identically plaited down their back.

“I didn’t think Ladies-in-Waiting were part of the Queens Fashion Council. I have a whole staff for that,” snapped Queen Kay. “Besides, I’m the queen. If I want to wear a pointy hat, I’m gonna.”

The twins curtsied but shared a look beneath their bowed heads.

“Stop that! And pick up my train so it doesn’t drag down the steps. It’s already filthy.” The young girls scrambled. Gertrude, or maybe Lilith, stepped on it while Lilith, or maybe Gertrude tried to pick up the queen’s train. The embroidered hem ripped off the velvet dress in a straight jagged line.

“Idiot girls! Now I have to have you beheaded or everyone will think I’m a weak queen!”

“No you don’t!” One of the girls cried, “No one has to know it was us!”

Everyone in the courtyard was looking at them. The stable boy was staring at them with his pitchfork in mid-muck-throwing.

“Off with their heads!” cried the Queen to nobody in particular.

The girls fled down the stairs running towards the castle gate. Nobody moved to stop them.

“Stable Boy! Stop those girls! Or your head will be on the chopping block.”

The stable boy didn’t move, but one of the guards who had been off-duty chased the girls down and dragged them back by their hair, screaming.

“Great. Now I have to kill the stable boy too,” thought the queen. “The pity of it. I hate being Queen.”

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“I think the pointy hat is called a steeple.”

“How do you know that?” I wasn’t sure.

“And I’m unclear about who Gertrude is when you introduce her. Also, are you sure Lilith is a Medieval name?”

“No, but it’s definitely an old name.”

Jimmy was silent for a while. I wasn’t sure why Jimmy was taking that writing a class. Maybe he wanted to be a writer. I think his dad had been a doctor. I’m not sure.

“Do you want me to spend the night?”

“No. I need to keep working on this.”

“Okay. It’s good Jimmy. Keep cracking at it.”

Jimmy turned back to his computer so I showed myself out. A siren was wailing from a passing ambulance so I turned up the volume on Marne’s television.

“Bye Marne. See you later.” Marne didn’t look at me so I left. I couldn’t catch a cab in Williamsburg so I thought I’d walk home. I had meant to ask Jimmy about the white horse, but didn’t want him to think I was criticizing. I wasn’t a writer either.