



THE MERCURY

THE STUDENT ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE OF GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

Year 2012

Article 1

1-1-2012

The Diener

Rachel W. Wynn

Gettysburg College, wynnra01@alumni.gettysburg.edu

Class of 2012

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [Fiction Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Wynn, Rachel W. (2012) "The Diener," *The Mercury*: Year 2012, Article 1.

Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury/vol2012/iss1/1>

This open access fiction is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

The Diener

Author Bio

Rachel is a senior IDS Business, Media, and Communications major who grew up on the sandy shores of Miami and migrated to the green mountains of Vermont in 2003. She immensely enjoys reading, writing stories, yoga, and baking treats. Her beloved book of the moment is *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern. Ahead is a journey to Washington, D.C., where she will eventually publish her six-year-old novel and earn an MFA in Creative Writing.

The Diener

Rachel Whittlesey Wynn

He stared at the credit card, numbers blurring in front of his eyes, wondering if this was the day he'd get caught.

"Sir, please let go of the card." The pudgy woman looked up at him, blinking rapidly. Her white-collared shirt was just tight enough to form rolls of fat that descended down to her sturdy thighs in waves. He could practically see the visceral fat squeezing her internal organs. "I have a message on my screen that says I need to confiscate the card. Please let go." But Tom pulled back, clenching the card between his fingers. He couldn't give it up. It was his favorite one: A shiny Gold American Express card. Sometimes he pretended it was actually made up of little flakes of gold that had bound together to create the perfect plastic shopping companion. He'd taken it two months ago.

It was the longest he'd had one of his special cards.

"Sir, if you won't let me have this card I'll have to call my manager..." Tom released the card, took the shoe box off the counter, and mumbled, "Fine, I'll put this back." He stared over his shoulder at her as he tossed the shoes onto a shelf near the door. Tom's swift eyes calculated twelve, maybe thirteen, years tops before her heart failed on the way to McDonald's.

He ran his fingers through his short, coarse black hair as he walked to the car. The cycle was off now, although maybe it was his own fault for keeping it over a month. He'd broken his own rule and now it had blown up in his pockmarked face. The door to his exhausted Subaru creaked open angrily and he nestled his head on the wheel. Who had reported it stolen? Edward Klein, who was he again? He racked his brains but all he could remember was Greg pointing out the odd birthmark on Klein's left shoulder, right above the bullet wound.

Why did it have to be his favorite card?

The engine whined to life and on the way back to the hospital he mused about his loss. He'd have to take another one today, if he was lucky. He always liked to have five cards.

Five was his favorite number.

Tom pulled into the dreary parking lot. "They could at least plant some fucking flowers," he murmured to himself. "Liven the damn place up." Through the bustling building he went, ignoring the overly enthusi-

astic nurses and frazzled doctors. He went straight to the door at the end of the ground level hall, and his large frame thudded down the dimly lit basement steps. He ducked, as usual, on the last step where the ceiling always brushed the crown of his head. The musty smell of death and sterilized chemicals filled his nostrils. Excellent, someone had been dropped off while he was gone and already placed on the body block too.

Tom tied his apron and Tom pulled on blue latex gloves, letting the rubber slap each wrist. The familiar perfume of death hit him as he unzipped the black body bag and read the tag. Female, Caucasian, age forty, hair brown, eyes dark brown, freckles form Orion's belt near inner thigh. He rolled his eyes at Greg's last note.

Examining her neck carefully, Tom didn't have to finish reading the chart to know the cause of death was strangling. The bruising was faded, but still visible, yellow sickly splotches. She was a smoker, he could tell just by looking at the lines around her mouth. Her breasts were wrinkled and pale, nipples defiantly puckered inward. He snaked his meaty hand into the plastic pouch that was fixed to the outside of the body bag. A tube of mauve lipstick, down to the last few applications, a pack of Pall Malls, white lighter, and...there it was, pink with tiny gemstones all over it. He grimaced at the tackiness and unfastened the little hook on top of the wallet. Nothing much, just a postage stamp, couple dollar bills, extra lubricated condom, and one cherry red debit card.

Grinning, Tom held it up to the lamp, where gnats happily buzzed around the light bulb. He glanced at them and made a mental note to toss out the rotting banana on his desk. Back to the card. Marilyn Cross, and wait, was it? He squinted at the back of the card. Idiot, her pin number was scribbled underneath the electronic strip. Four numbers to free money. When would people learn? He leaned back in his chair; it groaned under his weight and rolled backward slightly. The next purchase would be a new hamster wheel for Dilbert, his little friend.

The elevator in the back corner dinged and the doors opened as Tom quickly tucked the card into his pocket.

"Hey, how's the afternoon goin'?" Sid, Greg's gadfly intern, ambled over to the table and looked down at the woman in disgust. "Prostitute today?"

"Dunno, she just came in, no family this time. She's been dead for a while now, look, you can tell by how the skin—"

Sid cut him off. "Well, if nobody's gonna come get her, do your thing, eh?" He sat on the stool across from Tom and looked at him expectantly, hands clasped around his knee.

Tom stood up and frowned at him. "Don't you have a project to work on? Or something to file?"

Sid shrugged. “Nope, finished all that busy work earlier this morning, I’m bored now. And besides, last time I was here, when that blood spurted out, I almost spewed my lunch.” He barked laughter, and it echoed around the chilled room.

“You’re a freak,” Tom said and picked up his sharpest scalpel. “And that doesn’t usually happen, blood typically—”

“Whatever, just do it.”

Tom paused. “Why are you interested in this? I thought you were studying to do external work with Greg.” He surveyed Sid suspiciously.

Sid rolled his eyes. “Just cut her open. Do it.”

Tom put down his tool. “No. I think I’d like you to leave.”

Sid raised an eyebrow. “Do it, or I tell everyone you’re stealing.” Tom’s eyes widened involuntarily, but he quickly forced his face to a blank slate. “What the hell are you talking about? Steal what?” He crossed his arms, then promptly released them, remembering what he’d researched about body language.

“You know, the credit cards...” Shit. Sid grinned at him imperiously. “Now cut open this hooker. I wanna see the lung damage. Maybe I’ll snap a picture and show it to my punk niece; maybe then she’ll stop sneaking cigarettes off of the back porch.” He laughed again; his annoying nasally cackle made Tom cringe.

“You gonna tell anyone?” Tom grunted as he picked up the scalpel.

“Not if you let me watch.” Sid scooted his stool closer to the table.

“I could get you fired,” Tom said coolly, looking him straight in the eyes.

“And I could get you arrested.”

Tom gnashed his teeth. “Fine, then you have to assist; get an apron on.” Sid hustled over to the supply shelf and Tom sat down on his stool. With Sid over his shoulder Tom made the first cut. An incision in the shape of a Y from her shoulders down through her chest to her pubic area.

“Wow, she hasn’t shaved in a while.” Sid stuck out a finger to touch her graying mound. Tom froze, bile rising in his throat. He swallowed it down and stood up, his burly frame towering over Sid. “Don’t fucking touch her.”

Sid drew his hand back and rolled his eyes. Tom clenched the scalpel and a thought flitted through his head. Sid was scumbag, he didn’t respect the dead; he’d surely be the type to fuck the lifeless women when nobody was watching. Tom looked down at Sid, who was brushing lint off his tie.

Sid met his eyes and the maddening grin vanished. Unease washed over his brow and he stepped back, away from Tom. “You know, I think I’ll go back up now. I’m sure Greg is looking for me. Have fun with the lady,

you know, I bet when she was fresh and warm she screwed like a—”

Tom advanced and pushed Sid to the floor with one hand as the other rose in the air, scalpel gleaming. Sid shouted in surprise, closed his eyes, and flailed his limbs, knocking the instrument out of Tom's hand. A mad scramble ensued but Tom took a strong hold on his foot and pulled Sid toward him easily; but he didn't notice the scalpel in Sid's fist. There was a moment when they stared into each other's livid eyes, Sid gazing up at him with the tool shaking in his extended arm. Tom pulled him up by his feet and Sid, upside down and breathless, swiped at his thick ankles. His head impacted the cement floor and he moaned and rolled over in time to see the scalpel descend upon his neck.

The sliced jugular released a waterfall of blood and the diener watched in horrified fascination as Sid gurgled. A few seconds later his limbs relaxed; the silence burned in Tom's ears and his brain quickly began to fire off panic signals. Tom collapsed to the floor to hold down the wound in order to slow the bleeding, so as not to make a mess. The blood was tepid, almost the consistency of whole milk. He'd never touched blood this fresh before; it was typically dried and crusted when the dead met him. Tom gazed at the glistening puddle that was inching its way toward the stool. Trembling hands pressed in place until it stopped and he stood up and looked around wildly, crimson droplets falling from his hands.

What the fuck just happened.

His brain felt the same as when he had been jolted by a stun gun in college; a messy prank that left him with a heavy, tingling, and empty orb on his seized shoulders. Tom closed his eyes, and his heavy head immediately fell backward. They flew open at once and rested on a black body bag on the ground next to the desk. Tranquility rushed through his body and he hastily stuffed Sid inside the bag, squashing his arm in so roughly it snapped. Tom pressed his palms together and thought hard, and then it came to him. He grabbed a crematorium label, taped it to the bag, and lifted the body onto an empty silver gurney. The sink turned a rusty brown as he washed the intern off of him, out from under his nails, the water swirling gracefully into the depths of the pipes. Tom had just finished mopping up the blood when Greg came down the stairs.

“Hey, Tommy, you seen Sid around? The idiot's been away from his desk for a while now; he's probably in the maternity ward looking up hospital gowns.” They laughed together, Tom's pitch huskier than normal. Tom cleared his throat. “Nope, haven't seen him since yesterday. Maybe he took off, couldn't handle the pressure.”

Greg rubbed his prickly chin with his knuckles. “Yeah probably. There was something weird about him. You want me to take this body up?” He pointed to Sid.

“Sure, it’s been there a while, should be cremated soon. And I wouldn’t open it, the body’s a mess and it stinks like you wouldn’t believe.” Greg pushed it toward the elevator.

“Going out to the bar tonight? Matt and even Dr. Duncan are coming, you in?”

“Sure. I’ll buy a round of drinks,” Tom said, forcing what he hoped was a grin. Greg saluted him and the doors closed. Tom exhaled, closed his eyes, and turned back to the woman’s body on the table as he fingered Sid’s wallet in his pocket.