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"Sheeransanity"

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Author Bio

Thaddeus Cwiklinski is the prolific author of many sub-100 word autobiographies. His last work in the 2017 version of The Mercury was "A Deliverance Story". He has always wanted to go spelunking.

Sheeransanity

THADDEUS CWIKLINSKI

I.

“As far as musical impersonators go, Elvis still reigns supreme. Scores of sequin-clad, slick-haired, suave-toned frauds migrate to Las Vegas every year. There’s nothing original about them; most even hold down other jobs! Impersonating’s their hobby. This would be a lifestyle. I want to put my name out there and shake things up. I’ll be a game-changer. An iconoclast.”

“Kev, I don’t think the time is ever right for something like this,” Geraldine said to her husband. “The kids will notice. Frankie wants to drop out of college and form a doowop group...”

“That’s my boy.”

“It’s not funny, Kev.” She set to work scraping congealed Spaghetti-O’s from a pot in the sink. She hesitated. “Doesn’t the singer have to be dead first, anyway?”

“Not necessarily. Look at Rain: the Beatles are still two for four, assuming you discount that ‘Paul is dead’ theory and they’ve been around for a while. Soon they’ll have their own tribute band.”

“How about someone else? You’re six foot five and a little plus-sized. And the beard would have to go...”

“Like who? Who else would be as real or as raw? I need this. Let me be Ed.”

“How about Meatloaf!? You look the part, and your voice closer.”

“You’re kidding.”

“I’m not... well, maybe about the Meatloaf thing, but Kevin, I believe, from the bottom of my heart, that you’re not cut out to be an Ed Sheeran impersonator. I swear to God that you never should be.” Geraldine gesticulated forcefully with several chopping motions of a steel spatula, as if she were brandishing a hatchet.

Geraldine could see the hurt in Kevin’s nose; his nostrils constricted, as if to make themselves smaller targets of her wrath. Kevin’s eyes never really betrayed his emotions; they were dull and unchanging like a snowman’s. His nostrils, though: they told all. She felt slightly bad as he guiltily gathered up the garbage that had fallen behind the bin. His wide face had the benign, bewildered look of a panda bear or a whale. That had been what had made him different from any other beau-- his homeliness. Her other suitors had been reasonably good-looking and successful carbon copies with coffee breath,

stable jobs in the financial sector, and affluent families. What made Kevin so appealing was his lack of appeal.

Tonight, though, he was setting the bar of unappealing exceptionally high. I had two children with this man. Two! Geraldine thought. She wistfully watched as he galumphed out the door to take out the trash, trailing garbage behind him, oblivious to the ketchup stains on his sweat pants. The bottom of the bag gave out, and Kevin hurriedly stumbled out the door with one of his hairy arms supporting the excess garbage. Maybe it isn't so bad. Who am I to tell him what to do? Geraldine mused. He can sing alright, too. Not as well as he thinks, of course. But he can carry a tune, especially a sappy one.

“Incidentally, honey, have you seen my goddamn guitar picks?”

Kevin yelled from the garage.

Damn! The guitar picks!

“The wooden ones, not those cheap plastic imitations!”

Damn again!

“Daaaaaad,” squawked a small voice.

“Just a minute, sweetie,” Geraldine told her six-year-old. “Daddy’s being delusional in the garage.”

“What’s that?” asked Kevin, poking his bearded visage in through the garage door.

“Pretty please sing me a lullaby or I’ll bite your arm,” said Cate.

“As soon as you hop in bed, dear, and I find my guitar picks,” he replied.

Geraldine snorted quietly. The rosewood guitar picks made virtually no difference, but her husband insisted only rosewood produced “that smooth sound”. Cate scampered upstairs and Kevin found his picks underneath Lady Diphtheria, his guitar. He played a few chords from a song Geraldine despised and warmed up his vocals.

“Let’s buy a lava lamp and beta fish/ to signify our love with kitsch.”

It felt good to hold the guitar, his oldest friend and best investment. The base was chipped, and a thin yet defined crack in the veneer had grown just below two of the frets, but the strings, as always, were minutely tuned. He thumped the guitar appreciatively, as if to congratulate Lady Diphtheria, and walked to the stairs. Knowing that the journey would leave him winded and his melodious voice slightly wheezy, he braced himself for the climb. A true artist always suffers for his work. Geraldine grabbed his elbow, and cautioned him not to sing anything by “you-know-who.” A minute later Geraldine heard the intro to an Ed Sheeran song as Kevin’s winded voice wafted down. Damn!

II.

Kevin pulled the bedcovers up to his chin and off his humungous feet, thinking deeply. He had wanted to be an entertainer all his life, but productivity had never been his forte. He'd only written one song himself, and "Girl, Why You Gotta Waste My Time and Eat All My Goddam Hummus?" perplexingly, never did go platinum. He dropped out of college after a year, garnering no musical accolades. Still, he yearned to perform, to belt out hits he could make his own, even if he could create nothing of his own. Never before had he been intent on impersonating just one artist-- when he was young he could do a whole repertoire, from Frank Sinatra to John Denver, but no longer. Never before had he felt so strongly the need to personify or to be anyone other than himself. But there were two sides to Kevin Fayleur's torn inner psyche: now he was Kevin Fayleur, loving husband, stay-at-home father, and housekeeper, but he also desperately wanted to be, no, he desperately needed to be Ed Sheeran.

As he lay staring at the blinking red light of the smoke detector, Kevin hoped that he'd have a dream in which Ed would appear to give guidance. Instead, he lucidly dreamt that he had eaten a forty-four pound shoe sole on loan from the public library, and that Geraldine was fending off librarians in black suits and top hats with a tomahawk.

In what seemed no time at all, he awoke, gasping, "I'll reimburse you in good time, gentle scholars!" Sweat-soaked blankets bunched around his body. It was ten minutes before his alarm. With a relieved grunt and much exertion, he rolled from his bed like a seal flopping about in the surf. Geraldine snored lightly. Time to wake up Cate.

Kevin opened Cate's door. She lay horizontally in bed, clutching a three-legged stuffed raccoon, one of its remaining legs grasped tightly in her pudgy fist.

"Catie," Kevin whispered, eliciting no response. "Cate."

"Just shake her, Kev," came Geraldine's voice, muffled through the wall.

"CATE!" Kevin half-shouted-- it sounded broken and raspy. Not quite the syrupy smooth vocals of Sheeran, he thought.

"Good morning! Ringo says that you better make waffles today, or he'll give you rabies!" said Cate jollily, suddenly alert.

"Honey, it's getting late!" yelled Geraldine from the next room.

Cate popped down from her bed, unceremoniously hurled Ringo the Raccoon against the wall, and scampered to her dresser. Kevin burnt waffles, took Cate to school, and then returned home to recline on the sofa while strumming Lady Diphtheria and warbling.

III.

As the barber combed Kevin's freshly-dyed russet bangs out of his face, he looked at himself in the barber shop mirror. Wait until the world sees this. He thanked her profusely. She smiled unenthusiastically as she swept up the prematurely grey locks that she had trimmed before dying. She had advised Kevin against dying his beard to match his unnaturally orange head, but he'd bellowed, "Damn the pocketbook, I'll complete the transformation!" She declined to make any more small talk, having no desire to discover what "the transformation" referred to.

The owner of Lubberstown Hair Choppery, a round little man with spectacles as thick as magnifying glasses rang Kevin up. Kevin slapped a healthy tip on the counter with a flourish.

"Hold it, you remind me of someone ..." said the bespectacled manager, whose nametag read "Fatjon".

"What contemporary artist would you say I resemble?" Kevin asked the barber, who suddenly became fixated on sanitizing her clippers.

"I... don't know," she looked up. "A big Ron Howard maybe?"

Ron Howard. Kevin scoffed.

"You remind me of my son-in-law, that's who!" said Fatjon. "He's about your size! And you're right! He's a musician. Plays the oboe like it's nobody's business."

"Intriguing," said Kevin, genuinely interested, forgetting to sulk.

"You play instruments? Or sing?"

"I dabble."

"Well, maybe I should put you two in contact."

Kevin wholeheartedly agreed, giving Fatjon a vigorous handshake, his full name, address, cell number, email, and defunct linked-in account. As his customer with preposterously-dyed hair departed, Fatjon shouted, "Come to think of it, you do look a lot like that Ed Sheeran guy!"

"Not in the slightest," mumbled the hairdresser.

Kevin didn't hear her. He felt a newfound vitality-- he couldn't remember a better feeling since age 36 when Cate had been born and he had gotten a seasonal gig at a German restaurant to play Krampus. He swaggered out of the barbershop and into the parking lot, mentally "translating" the words "one haircut closer, one haircut closer" so they were in a rich British accent. He inhaled deeply, taking in Lubberstown's smoggy air, an atmosphere permeated by grime, a grime brought on by smokestacks, outdated sewers, and the town's ubiquitous feral pigeons. As Kevin walked towards his parking spot, he looked down at his scuffed size 14 spats, skirting the edge of the faded crosswalk.

He took his eyes off his shoes as he thought with elation: I have the hair of an auburn angel. He never saw it, but a car's tires squealed like an

off-pitch high note. His large frame was thrust onto the hood with a cataclysmic thud. The world lost its lucidity as flea-bitten, human-sized pigeons and guitars with legs danced in circles. Somewhere, somehow, soft pop played in the background.

IV.

Kevin awoke in the backseat of a minivan rolling down the interstate. His head was pounding.

“We weren’t supposed to run the poor guy over. Just rattle him,” said the driver’s sleepy voice.

“It was your idea to pick him up. We could have just left him. Or even waited and said it was an accident,” snarled a second voice. “Now we can get pinned with reckless endangerment too.”

Kevin opened his mouth to speak, but was petrified by the sight of a small silver object in the passenger’s hand. A gun! Horrified, Kevin slowly reached into his pocket for his phone to text Geraldine that he wouldn’t be home for dinner. It was gone. Upon looking closer, he realized that the object in the passenger’s hand wasn’t a firearm; it was a banana shoddily wrapped in tinfoil to resemble a handgun.

“Music?” asked the driver.

“Fine,” the passenger replied. “As long as it doesn’t wake the sweaty prince.”

“Excuse me, I don’t mean to be a bother, but would you turn on 89.5 the SPUD? I’d rather not listen to anything if not 89.5,” said Kevin.

The wiry frame of the passenger jolted as if he’d been electrocuted. The driver glanced at the overweight abductee. The passenger regained his composure and leered menacingly. “Two things: One, my van, my radio. I decide what we listen--”

“Usually he decides,” the driver interrupted. “On the way here, we listened to my Whitney Houston CD.”

“Correct.” The passenger sounded irritated. “But for the most part it’s smooth jazz or National Public Radio, sometimes both.”

“Lousy stuff,” added the driver.

“Could be worse,” said Kevin. It couldn’t hurt to be diplomatic.

“Second,” said the passenger, “don’t mess with Ed. He takes things personally. He may seem a sensitive soft soul, but that’s what he wants you to think--he’s a mogul with an iron fist. He doesn’t want just anyone imitating him. And what Ed Sheeran wants, Ed Sheeran takes because it’s rightfully his.”

“That’s true,” said the driver.

V.

Ed paced back and forth between pews. He had rented a megachurch from a group of enterprising Pentecostals under the pseudonym “Shed Ear-hand.” Unable to buckle down to record his latest album, “Love Schmuck” in the sacristy, he’d preoccupied himself by fiddling with a fog machine and perusing his ornamental cape collection. He hadn’t wanted to waste henchmen on an ignoramus. Yet Kevin had proven frustrating to nab. Ed knew he should have put someone more competent on the job. Terrence and Aaron staked out Kevin’s neighborhood to get a feel for his daily routine, only to discover that he didn’t have one. Ed revved the fog machine next to his throne to ensure that he’d make an impression befitting Oz the Great and Powerful. The iron doors of the church burst open with a resounding echo. A huge man with preposterous hair and a silly grin stumbled in alongside Ed’s goons, who laughed uproariously.

“...so anyway, I says to her I says, ‘You know, Ger, why don’t we just buy a timpani?’”

Aaron dissolved into giggles. “Boss, we brought him.”

“I can see that,” said Ed, taking in the sight of his artificially-orange superfan. “Is this guy a literal clown?”

Kevin stared at the auburn-haired angelic figure before him shrouded in mist. Could this be heaven? He fought to stand, willing his legs not to buckle underneath him. The figure hacked from the smoke machine’s fumes. Kevin cleared his throat.

“Sir. I’m speechless. It’s such an honor. I’m your biggest fan. Well, one of them; I’m a very large individual. My favorite song of yours is--“

Ed waved his hand dismissively. “Enough words.”

“Oh--of course! Anything for you Ed!”

“Can you sing? I have to be selective about impersonators. I have an image to uphold.”

“I know how you feel. Guitar please!”

“Girl, Why You Gotta Waste My Time and Eat All My Goddamn Hummus?”
an Original Song by Kevin Fayleur

Girl, I know you think that I’m a mess,
With more body hair than Mr. Tumnus,
But that’s no reason to waste my time,
And eat all of my goddam hummus.

I know that it’s just garbanzos,
And garlic, oil, and salt,
But baby I am real starving,

And it's really all your fault.

Four Verses Redacted Due to Copyright Infringement

It's hard to put a shape on love,
 But our love would be a rhombus,
 But it doesn't matter anyway,
 Because you took my hummus.

[GUITAR RIFF]

I'll try my best to forgive you,
 But some debts cannot be paid,
 The debris that was once so delicious,
 Will haunt me to the grave.

So please listen careful baby,
 And leave my heart in one piece,
 I don't want to always think of you,
 As a lowdown hummus thief.

There is one surefire solution,
 And it's a delicacy from the Middle East,
 So if you make me a batch,
 Then we'll have a hummus feast.

"Nice," said Ed. "It sounds a little like a Marvin Gaye song."