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Winesburg, Indiana: Inspector 4

Michael Martone

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Winesburg, Indiana: Inspector 4

Abstract

I am in quality control. I am quality control. I control quality here at the Pink Pearl factory. My job is to write out something, anything, on this piece of paper, and, then, test the eraser, a random nub from the lot, and erase, erasing every word. So, I use my test, this simulation, to write to you. I write this to you who worry that there will be evidence, a record, of our secret. "I just don't want anybody hurt," you write to me. "Destroy this," you write at the end of the note where you wrote "I just don't want anybody hurt." I'm an expert, making language disappear.

Keywords

redundant, copy, boring, dull

Cover Page Footnote

Note: "This story is exclusively available in the anthology, *Winesburg, Indiana*, published by Breakaway Books, an imprint of Indiana University Press, in the spring of 2015. Available wherever fine books are sold, borrowed, or used as dowry."

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November 30, 2012

Winesburg, Indiana: Inspector 4

Michael Martone

Inspector 4

I am in quality control. I am quality control. I control quality here at the Pink Pearl factory. My job is to write out something, anything, on this piece of paper, and, then, test the eraser, a random nub from the lot, and erase, erasing every word. So, I use my test, this simulation, to write to you. I write this to you who worry that there will be evidence, a record, of our secret. "I just don't want anybody hurt," you write to me. "Destroy this," you write at the end of the note where you wrote "I just don't want anybody hurt." I'm an expert, making language disappear. No more phone calls. "Your number will show up on the bill," you say when you call. "Strike me," you whisper, "from the call log on your phone." I control quality. I am qualified. I make space. Gaps. I erase erasures. "We must," you say, "not get carried away," "Delete 'Delete'." "You are driving me crazy," you write in the email, my email dangling down below where I have typed that you drive me crazy not from what you write but the way you hold my head, your fingers rubbing through my hair, how I spread open your lips with my tongue, its tip touching that nub, your pink pearl, sanding it flat, the stubble of my beard, iridescent irritant. "Rubbed raw," I write. Abrasion. My hand in your mouth. You gagged silent. No one should know any of this. Ever. We must control ourselves. Not write down anything. No evidence. Forget even this. Nothing left but some

crumbs rubbed clean, brushed from the empty, empty, empty, empty paper. *Booth, Vol. 4 [2012], Iss. 11, Art. 5*

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I am in control. I control. I control here
 the Pink Pearl write out something,
 anything,
 on this piece, test the eraser, a random nub
 erase, erasing every word. my test, this
 simulation, to write to you. I write this to you who worry
 there
 will be evidence, a record, our secret. "I just don't want
 hurt," you write to me. "Destroy this," you write at the end
 you wrote "I just don't want hurt." I'm
 making language disappear. No phone calls. "Your number will
 show up," you say when. "Strike me," you
 whisper,
 "from the call I control
 I make space. Gaps. I erase erasures. "We must," you say, " get
 carried away "Delete 'Delete'." " driving me crazy," you
 write dangling down below where I have typed
 you you write the way you hold my
 head, your fingers rubbin through my hair, I spread your lips
 my tongue, its tip touching that nub, your pink pearl, sand it
 flat, the stubble, iridescent irritant. "Rub raw," I
 write. Abrasion. My hand in your mouth. gagged silent. No one
 know any of this. Ever. We control ourselves. write

down evidence. Forget even this. Nothing left some
crumbs rubbe clean, brush from the empty, empty, , empty
paper.

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I m in control. I c nt . c nt here
 the Pink Pearl write out me , any i ,
 this piece , test the eraser, random nub
 erase, eras every wo . my test is
 simulation, to rite you. I rite you worry there
 will be our secret. "I just want
 hurt," me. Destroy this at the end
 I just want I'm
 making language disappear. No . "Your will
 show up you say . Strike me you whisper,
 call I control
 I make Gaps. erase erasures. We must get
 carried away "Delete 'Delete'. " " me crazy, you
 dangling down below where I typed
 you you the way you hold my
 head, fingers rubbi through hair, I spread lips
 my tongue, tip touch that nub, your pink pearl, sand it
 flat, the stub scent irritant. Rub raw I
 it Abrasion. hand in mouth gag silent. No one
 now any of this. Ever. We rol ourselves. writ
 do evidence Forget this Nothing some
 crumbs rubb clean, b ush o the , empty, , empty paper.

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 Pink Pearl rite me , an i ,
 this pie , the eraser, rand nu
 erase, era eve wo . test is
 simulation, you. I you worry there
 will our secret. just want
 me. Destroy the end
 I just want
 language disappear. No . You will
 show up you . Strike me you
 whisper,
 call I control
 I make Gaps. erase sure . We must get
 away 'Delete'." " me you
 dangling below I typed
 you you the you
 hold my
 head, fingers rub rough air, I re
 d lips
 tongue, tip touch that ink pearl,
 sand it
 at, stub scent
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it ion. hand in mouth gag silent. No
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in . I . her
Pink Pearl it me , an i ,
is i , he erase , and
erase, eve . test
on, you. I you the
will
our secret. us want
me. the end
I us want
disappear. No . You will
show you . me you ,
call I
make erase . us
away ' let '." " me you
below I
you you you
my
fingers rub air, I
tongue, tip at pearl
irritant.
I
it i . and i out gag i . o o
now this. . We o

do . it
get Nothing o
rub us o ,
empty, , paper.

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Pink
 Pearl me , ,
 erase , erase ,
 erase , . test
 you. you
 our secret. us
 disappear.
 show . me you
 , I
 erase us
 away \ ". " me you
 you you you
 rub air, I
 pearl
 irritant.
 out .
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rub
empty, , paper.

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rub
empty, , paper.

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Michael Martone was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and grew up there. As Fort Wayne was the site of, at least, nine forts (three each of French, British, and American fortifications, not to mention fortified villages of the Shawnee and Miami tribes), there was fostered in Martone a keen attraction to walls, fences, barriers of all kinds so much so that he was marked (as he matured) with what can only be thought of as a fetish for such structures which now (years later) expresses itself in his vast collection of examples he displays at his West End house in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. There, the visitor might find field stone walls (dry and mortared, finished and rough), vertical wood-picket fences with various finials and knurls, bamboo stave, horizontal clapboard running fence (reproduced in crosshatching or herring bone patterns), chain-link cyclone mesh, chicken wire, wrought-iron worked, brick, concrete block, red cedar plank snow-fencing, a four yard section of the right field fence bought at auction during the demolition of Yankee Stadium, corrugated galvanized steel, split-rail, adobe, dry-wall, wattle and beam, electrified, a slab from the Berlin wall with graffiti spelling out "wall" in German, and several versions of "invisible" pet fencing. Martone has a real fondness for star fortification (also known as trace italienne) and has in his backyard reconstructed the walled city of Neuhasel in Lower Hungary with its ravelins and redoubts, bonnettes and lunettes and tenailles and tenailions and counterguards and crownworks hornworks and curvettes and fausse brayes and scarps and cordons and banquettes and counterscarps and the long grassed glacis suitable for picnics. He also has the largest collection of barbed wire in west central Alabama, including an example of contemporary razor and concertina wire. Martone has also written the authorized biography of Joseph F. Glidden (of DeKalb, Illinois), widely regarded as the man who perfected Lucien B. Smith's original design of the famous agricultural fencing.

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