

Descending the stairs, she thought of the young girl in love, the invalid boy devoted to his painting, and the mother who loved her children and worked hard to provide for them.

She glanced around her. The stairway no longer seemed gloomy and dismal. Everything smelled fresh and clean. Before the door to her flat, she paused. Her bitterness had subsided, and she no longer feared herself and the emptiness of the room beyond. She looked down, and the key in her hand had become pure gold.

## Abdication

Lucia Walton

“**Y**OU let me alone!” Susie whispered angrily, rubbing the stinging spot behind one ear where a long, glossy braid began. Hurling a venomous glare at the fat, freckled boy behind her, she tossed her head and bent it over her arithmetic book. The boy pulled hard on her other braid; she drew them both over her shoulders and retied the blue bows at the ends.

“Teacher’s pet’s got pigtails! Teacher’s pet’s got pigtails!” Her face burned at the low singsong taunt. They’re just jealous, she thought. Mother said so. I can’t help it if they’re dumb and don’t get good report cards.

A gong sounded in the hall. Susie automatically reached inside her desk for her spelling book, then stopped as she remembered what day it was. Thursday! On Thursday there was always a spelling bee, and Susie always won. The unpleasant memory of the previous Thursday came back to her. She had spelled “encyclopedia” and won, and all the way home from school at noon they had pulled her hair and yelled “Teacher’s pet” at her, and the fat boy had shouted words which sounded nasty, though she didn’t know what they meant. She had wanted to ask her mother, but her mother would have wanted to know where she had heard them. Susie never told her mother how the other children teased her.

“Line up for the spelling bee, children,” called Miss Phillips. Susie went to her place, thankful that the fat boy was on the opposite side of the room. She spelled steadily, mechanically, when her turns came, trying not to giggle or look scornful when other children missed words like “their.” One by one the others misspelled and took their seats until only Susie and a boy across the room were left standing. The boy was nice. He didn’t tease her, and he was always second in the spelling bees. Looking hard at the boy, Susie felt the resentful eyes of the other children staring at her.

“Beggarr,” said Miss Phillips. Susie spelled it quickly, and the teacher turned to the boy.

“Beggarr,” he pronounced. “B—e—g—” he stopped, confused. Susie held her breath as he began again, then released it in a long sigh when he finished it correctly.

“Encyclopedia.” Susie did not hesitate. “E-n-c-y-c-l-o-p-i-d-e-a.”

"Repeat that, please." Miss Phillips gave Susie a puzzled look. Susie repeated it defiantly, exactly as she had spelled it the first time. The teacher looked at her sharply. "That is incorrect, Susie. You may take your seat."

Susie went to her desk, avoiding a foot thrust into the aisle in front of her. The dirty-faced girl who sat beside her snickered behind her hand, then exploded into a giggle, and the whole class laughed.

"Ha, ha," whispered the fat boy. "Teacher's pet ain't as smart as she thinks!" Susie regarded the inkwell in the corner of her desk intensely, wishing the bell would ring. It did, after a few minutes that seemed years to Susie. The class lined up at the door, filed out of the room and down the stairs. She would be safe as far as the corner; a big girl from the sixth grade whose mother was the Scout troop leader walked that far with her. Maybe they wouldn't, this time. Maybe just once they'd leave her alone. She turned the corner slowly.

"Ha, ha, Susie missed!"

"Teacher's pet missed a word!"

"Teacher's pet's a dummy! Teacher's pet's a dummy!" The fat boy jerked off one of her blue bows and threw it into a puddle. A big red-haired one pulled her sash untied. Susie walked on as fast as she could, trying to shut their jeers out of her mind, trying not to let them see that she could scarcely keep back the tears. When at last she reached the corner of her own yard, she ran around to the back door, so they couldn't see her crying. Her mother was in the kitchen. Susie tried to slip up the back stairs, but her mother heard a sniffle and called her back.

"Why, Susie, what's the matter? Come tell mother about it." Sobbing with great trembling gasps, Susie burrowed into her mother.

"I—I spelled a word wrong!" she howled, crying harder.

"Is that all! Heavens, child, everyone makes mistakes! What was the word?"

"Encyclopedia."

"Why, Susie, you know how to spell that. I expect you were nervous; it can happen to anyone. You mustn't feel so bad about a little thing like that."

## The Individualist

Jean K. Rauch

**T**HE word *individualist* is derived from the Latin word *individuus*, which means 'indivisible.' The suffix *ist* indicates that an individualist is 'one who is' indivisible. The word's meaning has been gradually expanded and enriched until now it suggests one whose way of life is determined by a certain philosophy known as individualism.

The individualist of today is a man who thinks for himself and