

I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER

Michael Hemmes

I always wanted to be a writer—a *famous* writer. I knew, of course, that I could never compare with Shakespeare, but I would settle for being remembered as a Steinbeck, a Hemingway, or a Faulkner. A Nobel prize or two, a few Pulitzers, and every one of my books being the featured selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club would satisfy me. After all, I'm a realist.

But now I sadly realize that I will never be a famous writer. Never will I be compared with Steinbeck, Hemingway, or Faulkner. No one of great importance will ever read my books—look at who's reading this now. It makes me want to cry.

You see, my first novel received its forty-third rejection slip from a publisher today. It was another mimeographed form letter with a blank space after the word "Dear". This time, they didn't even bother to fill in my name:

Thank you for submitting the enclosed material for our consideration, but we have found it unsuitable for our purposes at this time.

They hated it. Again.

But what could I have possibly done wrong? I always used the possessive case of a pronoun to modify a gerund. All of my copulative verbs linked a subject with an adjective or a predicate nominative. And I never let my participles dangle.

With a tear in my eye and revenge on my mind, I reached for the battered manila envelope containing my manuscript. There was 43¢ postage due. Choking back the tears of failure, I withdrew the black,

simulated leatherette binder which held 309 pages of my undying dedication. I turned to the first chapter and read:

It wasn't a pretty day in the little town. The rain pounded down upon the earth like thick globs of snot blown from the slime-green sky. Worms oozed from the murky cracks of the slippery sidewalks, only to have their jelly-like guts crushed underfoot or splattered by muddy automobile tires. The puke-like smell of wet, matted dog fur filled the air. No, it wasn't a pretty day in the little town. It wasn't a pretty day at all.

I was sick—from rejection, of course. Perhaps my description was lacking. Maybe I spelled some words wrong. Or perhaps I left out a period somewhere.

Nonetheless, they didn't want my book—but what do publishers know? Nobody wanted *Jonathon Livingston Seagull*. Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe had to publish their own books. And wasn't *Peyton Place* rejected twelve times? By God, if rejection is a sign of greatness, then I must have written a classic!

To hell with Steinbeck, Hemingway, and Faulkner—Shakespeare, move over!

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS BREAK

JoAnn Gocking

On the first day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, “Oh it's wonderful you have all this time free!”

On the second day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, “Take your jacket to the cleaners. Pick these things up at the store. And by the way, you'll have to do your own laundry.”

On the third day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, “Take your brother to the doctor. Drop this package off at Grandma's. Oh, and don't forget, you're picking up the tree.”

On the fourth day of Christmas break, my mother said to me, “Please help me bake these cookies. Did you fill the car with gas? Pick