

SECOND PLACE, YOUTH FLASH FICTION
LUCY GREEN

Evil in These Pages

Location: School Yard

Prop: An Old Book

Line Portion: “not for you”

I run through the school yard, their voices playing on repeat in my head.

“Artie, this is insane!”

“What’s wrong with you?”

“This has gone too far.”

“Artie, why?”

“YOU MONSTER!”

I trip on a rock and flinch as I fall. I feel the hot sticky fluid running down my face. I put a hand to the cut on my forehead and slowly pull it away. I wince as I see blood now dripping down my fingers.

I don’t hear their footsteps behind me but they must be close. I stumble to the spot. Already I’m starting to scrape at the dirt around the pole. I just have to dig it up before they get here. I just have to open it to finally get what is rightfully mine. I just have to prove that Daniel was wrong. I pause as the memory hits me. I try to push it down but it pushes back, stronger.

I’m in our home sitting in Daniel’s study. I look up at his familiar face. His tousled brown hair, his eyes the color of oak, the wrinkles around his eyes that are there only because of the years of laughter.

“Papa,” I say to Daniel, tears streaming down my face, “The book has been passed down from generation to generation in our family for years, remember?” I’m yelling now, “What did I do wrong? Why can’t I have it? Why Papa?!” Daniel pauses and I can tell he’s contemplating his next words carefully.

“Because Artie,” he closes his eyes for a second too long, a single tear slides down his face, “this is not for you.” I scream at him. I scream and scream and scream letting all my anger out on him. It’s too late after I stop screaming, it’s too late for my papa. It’s too late for me to realize that he’s slumped in his chair. It’s too late for me to realize the bludgeon on his head that wasn’t there before. It’s too late for me to realize the bloodied candlestick in my hand. I’m shaking as it clatters to the floor, and I collapse next to it sobbing.

I wipe my face with my sleeve. I refuse to think about that. I must only think about the book. The book. Another memory slams into me.

I’m in Papa’s study again but I’m younger. I’m sitting on his lap as he shows me the book for the first time. The leather holding it is rigid and cracking. The papers are old and flaking. But I

look at it in awe. It has a revered power.

“This Artie,” my father explains, “is the book. It’s been passed down in our family from generation to generation. It holds many wonderful secrets. Untold mysteries lie in its pages. Its ink is made from the beginning of time itself,” he runs his hand over the text as if he can feel the

history running through it. As if the lines were veins themselves and mystery coursed through them. And I know that they do. He turns the pages slowly letting me look at each and every one for what it truly is, magic. Then he turns the page. Before I can look at it his eyes go wide and he slams the book shut.

“That’s enough for now, pumpkin.”

I dig furiously and soon the earth gets damper and thicker and I know that I’m close. Suddenly voices shout from the other side of the schoolyard.

“Artie, you have to stop this! I know what’s happening. I found Daniel!” Then I hear Rosie’s voice. Rosie, my sister. The one who is always with me. Or at least, was. Until she decided that the book wasn’t important enough, that everything Papa worked for wasn’t worth enough. That doing whatever it takes wasn’t “nice” enough.

“Artie!” she yells over the wind, “Please.” Her voice cracks and wavers with that one word. For a second I want to run to her and hold her and tell her it’s okay. But only for a second and then, all that’s left is hatred, and cold, and hurt. She left me. She betrayed me. And worse, she betrayed the book. I suddenly hit something hard. Something solid. Something wonderful. I frantically finish digging. Dirt cakes my hands, and clings tight under my fingernails. But I don’t care. I’ve found my world. I pull it out reverently and stare at it in wonder. I smell the damp crispness of old paper and whispers immediately. I smile, but it looks more like a grimace from the years without practice. It’s here, it’s in my arms. It’s home.

“Artie stop!” Rosie screams, “there’s something you don’t know!” I’m pulled out of my trance and I slowly stand up hatred filling my eyes.

“Something I don’t know?” I whisper venom in my voice, “Something I don’t know?!” I scream at her, “Like how I don’t know why you left me? Or the book?!”

She winces. Good. She should be afraid. She should hurt. Just like me.

I look up at her smirking. Then I do what I’ve waited to do for so long. I open the book. I feel the energy crawling up my arms and coursing through my body. I laugh. It’s ragged, and broken, and horrible. I love it. Fear fills Rosie’s eyes as I flip to the page Papa never showed me. I’m transfixed in amazement, it’s everything horrid that ever walked the earth. I tilt my head confused, as the energy inside me clamps shut and squeezes. I gasp for air. I stumble and fall to the ground, my hands catching me before I hit the asphalt. I’m gasping, clutching wildly at whatever air I can catch. The pain is unbearable. I scream in agony as I watch everything evil crawl out of the book. The last thing I see is the inscription at the bottom of the page... ***Itaque***

liber te quoque

(And so the book claims you too)