

Ellipsis

Volume 44

Article 28

2017

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Leonel M. Castell

University of New Orleans

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Recommended Citation

Castell, Leonel M. (2017) "Marco Goes to the Fair," *Ellipsis*: Vol. 44 , Article 28.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/ellipsis/vol44/iss1/28>

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Marco Goes to the Fair

Leo Castell

I never like going to the park because I'm the kind of person that sweats whenever I see other people sweating. Most people seem only to go to the park for the sole purpose of sweating. As someone who does not like to sweat, I do not typically enjoy going where people are sweating, making me sweat, because I sweat when I see other people sweat, and as we've already established, I do not like to sweat.

I'm like the husband from that book where he has to bury his dead wife in some town and get himself some new teeth and in the beginning he's like "I will die if I sweat," except my wife is alive, I have all my teeth, and I won't die, I just hate it.

Today is different, though, because there's a fair going on, so no one's here with the express purpose of sweating. They're here to eat cotton candy, stand in line, and look for the restroom. All unpleasant things in their own way. but none explicitly involve going out of one's way to sweat. If there were ever a day for my wife to drag me to the park, it would be on the day they have a fair.

As we walked the fairgrounds, I found myself lost in thought about how actual people exist who genuinely enjoy cotton candy, who don't find it tastes like sugary hair. Then I remembered some people have a gene that makes cilantro taste like soap, so I reasoned perhaps these cotton candy people have a gene in their body that makes sugary hair taste not disgusting and weird. Perhaps this gene is in some way related to the cilantro-soap gene. I meditated on this for a moment before turning to my wife to ask if cilantro tasted like soap to her, and realized she was no longer beside me.

I dramatically spun around in an arc, absorbing every surrounding that I might find my wife and fulfill my inquiry. Thankfully, she was only several meters behind me, admiring some little boy sitting at a table, practicing witchcraft.

"Marco! Come see! It's so cute. He's making music with wine glasses!"

"We've both seen enough horror movies to know where this is going. Let's get out of here. I have something important to ask, anyway."

"What? I wanted to see what other songs he knew! Can you play a song for my husband, sweetie?"

"What song?"

"Do you know anything by the Beatles?"

"I know 'Eleanor Rigby'."

My wife waved her arms. "Oooooooh, play it, play it! I love that song. Marco, you're gonna love this! Marco?"

But I was already gone. I may not know the correlation between the cilantro-soap gene and people enjoying cotton candy, but I know witchcraft when I see it, and "Eleanor Rigby" might as well be the witchcraft national anthem. I now must shift my priorities from perhaps the greatest scientific discovery since air conditioning to saving my wife from a possessed little boy's witch song.

I continued to walk around the fairgrounds contemplating what course of action to take. I couldn't risk a physical altercation with the boy, since my lack of magic powers

left me at an essential disadvantage. Not only that, but he might turn me into a frog, and as far as I'm concerned, the only thing worse than sweating is being perpetually covered in mucus. I needed to be creative and figure out a way to break the spell that little boy cast over my wife. I needed to steer her away from the darkness that is witchcraft back toward the light of our air-conditioned home, but I didn't know how.

In the midst of my pondering a mystical-looking man with a trench coat and a beanie hat approached me. I knew he was mystical because he smelled like old socks without wearing socks, or shoes for that matter.

"Ayyyee mah guy, lemme learn you a thing about a stuff. Ima tell you what it is and what it isn't. What is IS is mah name's Chip and I am a Yo-Yo Gu-Ru. What it isn't is that you dunno how to yo-yo, but das okee cause I'm gon teach you to yo-yo. Now do ya dig, or do ya dig?"

This guy was REALLY good at talking and I thought he had me because he only gave me two possible responses, but they were both actually the same, thereby giving me the illusion of choice when in reality the only option I had was to dig. But I noticed a flaw in his logic and pressed on it.

"Wait. . . so I *do* know how to yo-yo?"

"What?"

"You said that what it isn't is that I don't know how to yo-yo and that you're gonna teach me how to yo-yo. If that's what it isn't, then doesn't that mean that I *do* know how to yo-yo and you're not gonna teach me how to yo-yo, because you can't teach someone who already knows how to yo-yo how to yo-yo?"

The mystical man and I stared awkwardly at each other for a full minute. After a long snuffle the man finally said, "My name's Chip. I teach people how to yo-yo. Do you know how to yo-yo?"

"I do not know how to yo-yo."

"Would you like me to teach you how to yo-yo?"

"Will it help me save my wife?"

"Sure."

"I would like you to teach me how to yo-yo."

"Alright then, follow me."

I followed the mystical man named Chip to an unoccupied gazebo away from the actual fairgrounds. He sat me down and proceeded to whip his left arm whereupon a yo-yo flew out of his sleeve. He then twerked his wrist back and caught the yo-yo, not before doing the same thing with his other arm. Then he proceeded to throw and catch the yo-yos in my general direction, narrowly avoiding striking me all across the face and neck with the high-velocity spindles of what seemed like certain death. I was amazed, but also terrified. Mostly terrified. So terrified, I didn't even notice I was crying.

"You had a yo-yo master?" I said, sniffling.

"Yeah, back when I visited Japan. She was a remarkable young lady. The most feared sukeban in all of Kyoto."

"What's a suke-"

Before I could finish he flung his trench coat open, revealing the t-shirt and gym shorts he wore beneath it, along with a wide variety of multi-colored yo-yos duct taped to his person and the inside of his jacket. Some of the yo-yos had spikes on them and at least one had tiny light bulbs on the inside.

“Choose,” he said.

I reached out for the yo-yo with the tiny light bulbs on the inside only for the mystical man to immediately spin away from me and smack my hand with his right sleeve yo-yo as he came to face me again.

“OWIE OWIE OWIE OWIE OWIE! That really hurt, what’d you do that for!?”

“I was not talking to you,” he said calmly.

“What?” I asked, my hand still shaking.

“I was talking,” he paused, regarding me meaningfully, “*to the yo-yos.*”

The mystical man closed his eyes and slowly opened his trench coat once again. His spinning motion had unstuck some of the yo-yos taped to his shirt and they fell to the ground, revealing Godzilla’s visage on his chest. I just sat there quietly staring for a few seconds.

“I like your shirt,” I said.

He just kept standing there, with his eyes closed, like he was flashing me. A few minutes passed before I started to hear what sounded like snoring.

“Are you sleeping?” I asked.

“Hngghghhhhhhhhh.”

“HhhhhhhnnngnHHHHGHGH.”

“This guy is the most mystical man ever,” I thought. Not only is he a yo-yo guru that smells like old socks without having any on his person, but he can also sleep without a cover to protect him from monsters or even a pillow.

Then I realized he doesn’t need a cover because the monsters are afraid of the yo-yos! Of course they would be! Have you ever been hit with a yo-yo? I was! It hurt a lot. The back of my right hand is purple and it hurts to move every finger other than my thumb. If I were a monster, I wouldn’t wanna be hit by a yo-yo. Witches are basically monsters, so one of these yo-yos should do the trick.

I looked down and picked up the yo-yo that fell closest to me by the piece of duct tape still stuck to it, using my good hand of course. I flung it around until the yo-yo came unstuck from the tape, then wiped the tape off on the mystical man’s chest because I didn’t want to take any more than what I needed from him. He didn’t move.

I picked up the chosen yo-yo from the ground once again and admired the donut pattern that was previously hidden beneath the piece of duct tape.

“Ah,” I said to myself. “The Yo-nut.”

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. In that moment I felt my place as a tiny being armed with his Yo-nut on a spherical planet making an elliptical path around the sun. I saw myself as the sun; the earth, my yo-yo; its orbit, the donut. This also meant that I was the donut hole, but I didn’t think too much about that because I couldn’t understand how someone could just *be* a hole, but everything else felt... right. My mind was clear, my cause was true. I knew I was ready.

With the Yo-nut held tightly in my left hand I dashed back to the little witch boy. I ran faster than I ever knew I could run, so fast that the world around me turned into a blur. I was panting, wheezing, pushing my legs and lungs to their limits. I am certain that if I could see myself running there would have been speed lines behind me, that’s how fast I ran.

Then I saw him: the boy who captivated my wife, heedlessly running the tip of his index finger along the rims of variously-sized wine glasses. Little did he know, his little melody would be the soundtrack to his undoing.

In a scene that, were life a movie, would have been in slow motion, I curled my left arm back and, utilizing the momentum of my incredible speed, launched the Yo-nut forward with all the force of a cheetah with a catapult strapped to its back. The Yo-nut, inheriting my velocity, screamed through the air. I couldn't see the speed lines behind it, it was going so fast.

The Yo-nut flew in a straight line just over and past the wine glasses, narrowly avoiding striking the little witch boy's hands. It kept going until the Yo-nut collided with the bullseye of the dunk tank, dunking the person sitting over the tank.

"Bullseye!" A little girl's voice rang out.

I collapsed to the ground, clutching my ribs and wheezing. I couldn't feel my face, but I started crying again. I knew because I could see the tears rolling off my face and hitting the pavement this time. My whole body hurt. I've failed in so many ways: as a scientist, as an apprentice, and finally, as a husband. I sat there on my knees, broken, chasing my breath, when I felt someone looking at me. It was Cheryl!

"Marco!" She helped me back up. "Where have you been?"

"I—thought—I'd lost you—forever," I panted.

"Marco, "Eleanor Rigby" is only two minutes long.

"What?"

"And why are you sweating? You hate sweating."

Then it dawned on me. I wiped my forehead with the back of my good hand and examined it. It was wet. Scientific failures aside, I still knew what I knew about gravity and understood that my tears wouldn't fall upwards towards my forehead unless I was upside down. I was not upside down. I was sweating.

"No," I said still clutching my ribs and panting.

My wife still had her hand on my shoulder, but she was also looking around with a worried look on her face.

"Geez Marco, you made a scene! Everybody's looking at us now! Why'd you throw a yo-yo at that little boy? You scared him! And you almost knocked over his wine glasses! We gotta get out of here, he started crying and I think he went to get his parents!"

"So wait," I said still panting. "You're still my wife?"

"Of course I'm still your wife Marco, but we need to get out of here! I don't know how I'm going to explain to someone why my husband almost beamed a yo-yo at their son. Where'd you even get a yo-yo anyway?"

"I—was trying—to—"

"Just explain it to me in the car. We've been here a while. Let's go home."

My wife power walked past me toward our car, looking down and trying to hide her face. I stood still a moment, trying to catch my breath and wiping the sweat from my face with my shirt. I'd never sweat so much in my entire life, but it didn't bother me as much as it usually would. Perhaps because, in spite of everything, I did save my wife and now was going back to my wonderful air conditioned home in my wonderful air conditioned car with my un-air conditioned, but still wonderful wife. I had finally

regained my breath and was about to make my way back to the car when a girl approached me.

“Hey mister! That was wild what you did back there! I was beginning to think no one would ever get a bullseye!”

“Excuse me.”

“Yeah, you were our first bullseye! You didn’t wait in line, so it wouldn’t be fair to give you one of the big prizes, but seeing someone get dunked made a lot more people wanna try, so I think you deserve something.”

“Oh cool, what do I get?!”

“This five-pound bag of cotton candy!”