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THE FACE



BY JEFFERSON HOROWITZ

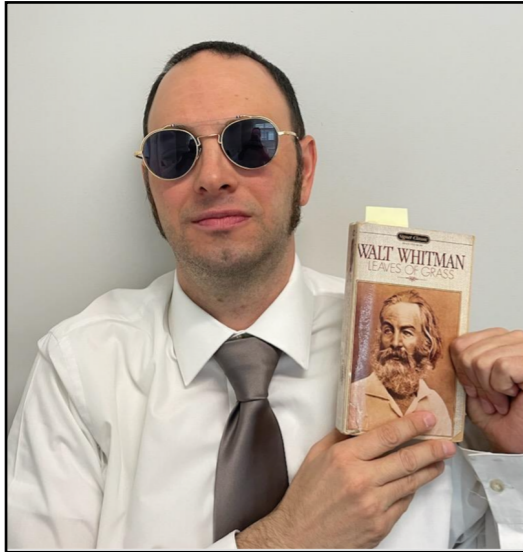
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Biography



During his time in secondary school, Jefferson was part of the Duo & Individual Interpretation Forensic Team where he performed the role of Lenny in *Of Mice and Men*. In addition, he also performed three different roles in Eugene Ionesco's *Man with Bags*.

Since then, he has performed minor roles in several Shakespearean plays and in Craig Lucas's *Reckless*. Moreover, he also played Clov in Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*.

Jefferson's passion for playwriting has continued; he has directed, performed, and written several of his productions, including *Watchful Eyes Part 2* and *Into the Stretch*.

Recently, Jefferson obtained his bachelor's degree in philosophy and has completed his master's degree in psychology, completing his thesis entitled, *The Monologues and the Self*.

He was honored to present his findings at the 2023's Lynn University Student Research Symposium in April.

Jefferson has also had his literary works published in Lynn University's literary and arts journal, *Quest*, and his academic work preserved in the university's digital repository, SPIRAL.

For now, Jefferson lives by the words of Dylan Thomas:

My horrid images for me,
Of over-fruitful smiles,
The weightless touching of the lip
I wish to know
I cannot lift, but can,
The creature with the angel's face
Who tells me hurt,
And sees my body go
Down into misery?
No stopping. Put the smile
Where tears have come to dry.

The Face

By Jefferson Horowitz

Do you believe?

The family was homeless, but the father still had the glasses in his shirt pocket. It didn't matter about tomorrow, it being a new and poverty-stricken day — *the glasses were secured*.

The father knew it, and so did the mother, but not the boy. He was too young. The only thing the boy knew was that his father was holding an urn where his grandmother rested neatly in her ashes. The boy adored his grandmother, who died a week earlier.

They were rushing to catch the next train. It was the boy's first trip on a train. He saw trains from a distance when he had a home; he even saw all the different colors and models on his TV when he used to have one of those, too.

When they went to the validation station to check in, they were greeted by an unfriendly robotic ticket-taker. Its name was stenciled on its nameplate: Number 4. They were never known for their humanity or their compassion, and this situation did not set a precedent.

Number 4 forced the father to leave the urn behind. He looked at the father, he looked at the mother, and then he looked at the boy. Then, he glanced at the urn and repeated, "This is not validated. This is not validated. This is not validated. This is not validated."

Finally, the father put the urn on the table. The mother cried and so did the boy, but Number 4 was silent. They were all happy about that. The father still had the glasses in his shirt pocket. It must be understood once again, the boy loved his grandmother.

"What was left of her will be set on a foreign table, handled by some skinny, wiry, unaffectionate mechanical bastard like Number 4," the boy thought to himself. This was beyond the realm of disgust even for a family driven into poverty.

The family needed the train if they wished to survive another day. A few moments later, the boy was waiting in the holding section and was watching his dad pay Number 4. The boy was unaware of how many credits it would cost for the family to board the

train, but he knew it was a lot, and he also knew it was everything they had.

These were creepy times for the boy and the rest of the family. The train would serve as his home for many years, and he knew it. These days, trains did not transport; they stored people who had nowhere else to go. After a half hour or so, his mother and father walked toward him after one final attempt to collect his grandmother's ashes proved unsuccessful.

"Why is Grandmother invalid?" the mother asked.

"Because she died, Mommy," the boy answered.

"Nobody is invalid, son, even when they are dead. Remember that," the father replied.

The mother moved closer to her husband and held his hand. The train whistle gave a high-pitched screech, and everybody knew it was their final time to board. All the residents from the holding section galloped forward inside the train.

The boy walked between his father and mother; they were all silent. There was so much to think about, which provided all the conversation they needed. There was a riot going on internally.

The boy was lost in his thoughts.

A bullet on a track, our new home, our old home, part of my history, looking at father, hearing mother, something is changing in me, it is fatal. What am I going to do?

"I think you will see your grandmother again," said his father.

"How?" asked the boy.

He gave the boy a half-smile. The boy didn't understand him. *How could he smile when we have nothing, not even ashes?*

What the boy did not know is that the father still had the glasses in his shirt pocket. He would not understand what they were even if he knew they existed. He did not realize that the world still had magic within it. How could he? Would you?

The doors closed and the train immediately accelerated, flying across the flaming, red-hot tracks and a nonstop trip. There would be no time, no month, no year, no hour displayed on any monitor on the train. The next stop would be 10 years away on November 1, 2052.

By then, the boy would be a young adult, living his most fashionable years on the flying bullet, as he began to call it. His life was being altered with every passing second. Everybody knew that, especially the boy.

The first night, the family unpacked what few possessions they were permitted to bring with them, which was not much. A few

items of clothing, two books, a bag of pictures — some with grandmother — and no jewelry.

The next day, as they slept, the boy used the cold window as a pillow. There was only one pillow for the three of them, and it was decided that his mother should have it. As the train raced through the night, the boy could hear all the vibrations coming from the outside world, but he could not see the world as he passed it by.

“I want to look out the window and see my grandmother,” the boy moaned.

It was still dark, with not a speck of light coming through the window. Just cool, immense, and thick darkness. It was amazing the boy could hear anything.

The ghosts of the darkness must have been roaring and tapping loudly, he thought. He looked up at his father.

“I want to see her again, Dad.”

“I know, son, I know. But not quite yet,” answered the father.

“Later, just a little later, sonny!”



“I want to see her,” the son repeated.

“Hold on to the spirit of your grandmother,” the father said as he grabbed his shirt pocket checking for the glasses. Yes, they were there. He knew it, but the boy still did not know.

The father had been awake looking at the mother and the boy, thinking about their future, about his guilt, about the urn. Think! think! think! He had to wait and did not know exactly why, but it was all in the wait, that is all he knew.

“Son,” he said, “I believe tonight will be the end of your childhood. Enter adulthood! Does that frighten you?”

“Oh, love,” interjected the mother, disheartened by father’s comments.

Somehow, she desired that the boy would get over the grandmother’s death and remain her little boy forever. She realized that both her desires would never come true, though, but she was still glad she still had them. She loved her boy. She looked back at him, mournful with a slight tear coming out of her right eye. His face grew concerned and his lips trembled.

“Mother, I’m alright. It will all be fine, don’t worry.” He turned to his father. “Will I see my grandmother, really?”

“No doubt, no doubt, not even a slight misdirection,” answered the father.

The mother shook her head and started to say, “Please—”

The father interrupted her, though.

“It will happen, only if you believe. Do you believe, son?”

He nodded and his father left. The mother and the boy were not sure where he went. They were curious, as there was something suspicious about the father lately. Perhaps it was starting life over. Perhaps it was the flying bullet. Or perhaps it was simple fatigue. Nonetheless, there was something different about him. What was it? When he returned, his hand was over his shirt pocket and a smile spread across his face.

“Are you ready?” he asked the boy.

“Why are you holding your pocket, Father?” The boy finally asked.

He found out, but how can he know what is inside my shirt pocket, the father thought. He is a very perceptive young man, isn’t he? Maybe, it is the way I am holding my shirt pocket with such a grip, with such intensity. Maybe I am insane. How would the boy or anybody know what is in my pocket?

“Never mind my pocket. It’s time! It’s time! Do you still believe?”

The boy stood up.

“Yes, I believe. Show me, please show me.”

“Let’s go. Follow me,” instructed his father.

Still holding his shirt pocket, he continued smiling feeling the bouncing inside his pocket. There was magic in everything and the father knew it. The boy turned to his mother and waved. She sat leaning against her pillow, giving him a feeble wink.

The father led the boy down the hall and up a ramp while the mother secretly trailed behind, giving them a little father-son time. The train sped on, challenging the invisibility with its mighty presence. No slippery track or hand of time could slow down the flying bullet. And as the boy felt the pulse of the train, every few seconds he lost his balance. He kept pushing forward, though. Nothing would stop him.

“I wish you weren’t doing this. I do not understand why. Let’s go back,” cried the mother from a distance. The father and the son heard her. They always heard her.

“You will see, you will understand, and you will believe. The both of you, believe, you must believe,” responded the father.

They came to a steel door. Father tapped four times, and a box within the door presented itself. He punched in a three-number code, hitting enter twice. There was a click on the other side of the door.

“Open the door, son,” instructed the father.

The room was dark. There was a huge bay window. It was inviting as if it had two, invisible glass hands luring the boy closer and closer. How gregarious it all felt, yet he was still intimidated.

Do you believe?

The father grabbed the boy’s hand. He pulled out the glasses from his shirt pocket. It finally happened. They were black frames, but instead of two lenses, there were two Xs. How odd! *They were magic glasses.* The boy took them, looked at them, looked at his father, glanced at his mother, and put them on.

“Go to the window, son, and believe.”

He stepped closer to the window. The father and mother stepped out of the room; the door closed. This was for the boy only. He pressed his face and hands onto the bay window. The glasses fit his face firmly. They were made for his face; it was all about the magic. He stood there for some time, pressed together, just looking out into the darkness, feeling the train rush through the terrain, which all looked the same — a great wide void of nothingness, waiting and watching for something to happen.

Suddenly, he saw a face on the other side of the window. He could not believe it. There was a face outside in the darkness. It was an old wrinkly face as if it needed to be ironed, but it was a familiar face. He took the glasses off; the face was gone.

Do you believe?

The boy put his glasses back on and stared out of the window once again. The face returned, staring directly back at him. He realized who it was. Who else would it be? He looked again; the face was pressed up against the window. He smiled and pressed his face against the window. They made contact! And then the outside world became illuminated as if it transformed into a forest of lights, thousands of lights, perhaps even millions. The boy did not care nor did he count. The only thing he thought was, *I don't need grandmother's urn anymore.*