

Daniel Silverman

Creative Writing

Mrs. Pransky

Relativity

What he thought was going to be a normal day turned out to be the most abnormal of them all. John Norris had enjoyed writing since his childhood. While growing up in the city, he kept a careful diary in which he wrote his every action down. Even through college, where work took up most of his time, he managed to squeeze in a few pages each day. Edited, his diaries became his first book, which he called “My Focus on My Self”. The book was moderately successful with the public, and a giant success with the critics. “The characters come alive,” wrote one critic. “A real story about a real person,” wrote another.

This day, so far, was like any other. Up at eight, write, eat breakfast, write, eat lunch, write. Norris was working on his fourth book, tentatively titled “Night and Cold”. He was at a standstill; a good time to break for supper. Supper: canned peas, macaroni and cheese, milk, and an apple for dessert. Norris lived alone, and never was much of a cook.

“Yeah, that’s what I’ll do. I’ll stop for supper,” he thought. He closed his notebook, took his glasses off, and rubbed his eyes. He walked out of his study into the cubicle he called a living room; a chair with a small table next to it, and a two-seat couch.

Wait a minute. What was that pile of papers sitting on the table? Norris hadn’t put it there. He never left anything he had written just laying around: everything had its place.

He concluded that the charwoman must have put it there. Hmm, wasn’t it her job to clean up and not mess up? Anyway, he started reading the thing.

What he thought was going to be a normal day...”

“What is this? I never wrote this!”

He read on.

Turned out to be the most abnormal of them all. John Norris had..."

"John Norris!" he echoed.

"...had enjoyed writing since his childhood. While growing up in the city, he kept a careful diary in which he wrote his every action down..."

"Hey, is this a joke? Who wrote this? Where did it come from?"

He read on. He read until he came to

"Wait a minute. What was that pile of papers sitting on the table?"

"Now wait a minute. What's going on? This is taking place right now! As I'm doing what I'm doing!"

He sat down in the chair by the table and read more. He read about trying to convince his analyst that he did not write the story, and how he left Dr. Dorfman's office before he was able to convince him of it. He read about realizing he was only a character in a story. He questioned his own existence. He read it until its end.

"Christ. This is important. I don't know if it's a joke. I'd better show it to him. If this is really me in here, I...Christ! I don't know what! But how can it be? But it's all right her! Right here!"

He left his apartment for his appointment. He got into the elevator. The old lady who lived down the hall entered with him. "Yeah, I read about her being her...and my saying this. This is for real."

"But how does she add to the story? Does she help explore my personality? Well...I'm not going to let her get to me. I'll keep my mouth and brains shut tight.....This is silly.....Everything is still on paper. My very existence provides enough of a character no matter what I say or do. So I guess she helped me to realize this. Damn."

He exited the elevator and made his way into the brilliant city light. He saw the hundreds of people walking through the streets. “Hmm...extras,” he thought.

He arrived at Dorfman’s office. “Listen Don,” he said in a serious tone, “I have something to show you that, well...just listen.”

Dorfman sat forward in his seat and listened intently.

“This evening I was about to get supper ready when I noticed a set of papers lying on the table in my living room. I read it through and...well...I discovered, or realized, that it was me.”

“That *what* was you?”

“That it was me in the story...That I was the main character.”

“But you often write about yourself.”

“No!” But this time it’s non-fiction. I mean, well, I didn’t write it. I didn’t even write it! I just found it there like I said. I read it and it’s about me. How I find the story and come to see you and tell you.”

“Do you have it with you?”

“Here. Read it.” He handed the story to him. He read it.

“I admit, the conversation is similar to what we’ve been saying.”

“Similar? It’s verbatim! Don’t you remember?”

“But you know John, you’ve been coming to me for three years now. Analysis isn’t only ‘doctor learns patient’. You’ve learned a lot about my personality as well. I don’t think it would be too difficult for you to anticipate what I’m going to say. You know, it’s really a clever idea though. Maybe you should consider submitting it to—“

“I told you, I didn’t write it!”

“You really didn’t? Or let’s say you really believe you didn’t write it?”

“Look. I didn’t! Is it so inconceivable? Look, it might be real, might be true. How would you know? What makes you so sure you’re really there? Maybe you exist just to help me explore my character!”

“Just listen to yourself John. You’re trying to change reality, alter it. Make it false. You’ve become too absorbed in yourself. I’m worried that—“

“I’m telling you, look, I’m trying to be patient but you’re making it difficult. I didn’t write the bloody thing. I found it. In my living room it was sitting there and I read it and it was my story—

I mean it was about me and it even went into the future. And that future stuff has since taken place. Verbatim from the story. Look, you read it, you know that what I'm saying now appears in the story.

Dorfman thought to himself. "Christ, he really thinks this is true. Is he really cracking up? Is he so unhappy with the real world that he's making it a non-real world? What's going to take its place? One of his stories?"

"Ok, look, I believe you that you don't think you wrote it. Let's just put it that way. I want you to go home and take it easy. Don't write for a while. Maybe just together with some friends and go out, huh?"

Norris left. He went home and thought, "Shit, I'm not going out. He re-read the story. Yes, everything fit.

He decided to go out after all, but just to walk around by himself.

He watched the people walking along the street as always. "I'm just a character. In a story. But why shouldn't I have thought I was real? That's how I was brought up, schooled. But I was never really brought up, was I? All my memories are just that—memories. Thoughts implanted in my brain by some storyteller. And the people I know. They're not real either. Just explorations for my character.

"He didn't believe me. If he did, the story would have had to change. Somehow I don't feel clean knowing that someone is picking through my brains. I mean, creating my brains, my entire self!" He began to panic. "Why don't they let me live the way I want to! I don't want to be controlled by some pre-destined story. What kind of sadist wrote my story anyway. Putting me through this. No other story ever had a character like me. At least not in *my* world it didn't. But maybe in theirs they have crazy people like that author. Ha! Maybe he's just a character in someone *else's* story! Maybe his writing about me is just an exploration for his own character! Maybe *he* doesn't either!" This thought gave him a little consolation and he became more relaxed. "Do the characters in my stories have universes as well? Do they think they're real? Should I tell them otherwise? No! I'm not cruel. I don't want to put anyone else through this. I know I don't exist. But I'm the only one. None of my characters will ever know."

He went home and read the story again, concentrating on the last line.

"He went to sleep early, knowing that he would never wake up again."

He made some soup for a snack, and then thought, “Why bother?” He went to his bedroom and lay down on his bed, fully clothed. He went to sleep early, knowing that he would never wake up again.

The End

After several revisions, Danny submitted the story to his teacher, feeling confident that it was a job well done...