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DISTRACTIONS

The Writer's Wife by William Lenco

It hardly made any difference whether she set the tentious as ever. alarm or not. She was always the one who was up first. He was just plain irresponsible. She wasn't. No sir-He just couldn't seem to do it. Couldn't keep up. He ee-bob. She was the most responsible person in the was getting old, he said. He was getting tired, he com- whole god damned country. All she wanted was a plained. She was just too active, he almost whined. small place to call her own so that she could raise a She hated it when he whined.

the Good Book it was true when she saw her friends some time doing her own thing before she went off at the hairdressers that Wednesday - He said, "Bev, I'm to work in the afternoon. All she wanted was somea smoker. I drink too much. I think too much. I lie one to take care of her. Someone to make sure she awake at night too much. I just can't always have the had what she needed and could get at least some of energy that you want me to have - I'm sorry". Can you what she wanted. All she wanted. All she wanted. All just believe that? Her friends could. They knew him. she wanted was what he had. They shook their heads and made tsk-tsk sounds with

job she had worked hard to get and harder to keep. A had written. There was a big ashtray just full of butts job where she was important. Where she worked long beside him and a lit one was sitting just on the corhours to bring home food so that he could eat.

- He was a writer. But what had he published? One There was a half glass of rye on the table beside a book. That was three years ago. "Yes but I'm working sheaf of papers, and a half full bottle beside that which on another you don't understand

men seemed to have when they were feeling particu- rette out of his moth and winked at her in a cheerful larly superior. What didn't she understand?

a quart of rye and a pack of smokes. He couldn't af- there underneath it all. The great American novel. ford it if she wasn't putting food on the table. That The one everyone always spoke about but so few was for sure. You could take that to the bank and travel could write. It was there. Behind his eyes. All he had the government, through some clerical error on their paper and they would finally have everything they part no doubt, had been kind enough to give him, wanted. Everything they both wanted. would not have kept him in paper, let along kept up with his vices.

money anyway. He didn't deserve it. He wrote one would see it in his eyes. She could see it in the way book! Three years ago! Except for a couple of short he made her feel. She could see that everything was stories that he wrote the year before that, he had done going to be alright. nothing. And he had gotten ripped off for those! Paid a measly sixty dollars each! For two stories that took him months to write? Who could live on thirty bucks a month? No one, that's who. He certainly couldn't.

That was most of the problem though. He was bad with money. It was bad enough when he threw his own money away on crap like smokes and booze but this was her money, buster, and he'd better remember that if he knew what was best for him. Even the grant money was hers. In a way. It really was. She paid taxes. He didn't. She wouldn't be surprised if her tax dollars went to finance every lame, out of money, qualify for grant money author in the whole damn country. That's what the government did. They decided that all of her hard earned money, that they practically stole each month from her paycheck, went into a pool so that

family. Then when the kids were at school she would He had said this to her one day - and she swore on do the housework quickly so that she could spend

She looked in on him. He was sitting. As he was their tongues. How did she cope? Why didn't she leave? most days. Shifting between being hunched over the What was keeping her? She had a job. A good job. A typewriter and being stretched out to reread what he ner of his lip. It was hanging down in a casual way What did he do? Nothing. Well almost nothing. Sure and his left eye was closed to keep the smoke out. he'd had for almost a week.

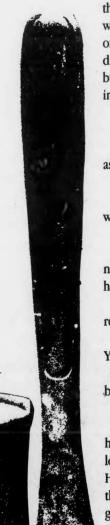
That was it. That, "You don't understand", that all He swivelled suddenly in his chair, pulled the cigaway. There was a little taste of "Get away, I'm writ-She understood that he couldn't afford to sleep in ing" in his eyes but there was a lot of "Hi honey, I till noon and then sit at a typewriter till three am with love you" and she could see the next novel sitting on the interest. His little, meagre "grant money" that to do was grab it from back there, throw it down on

That's why she had married him, she had told the girls at the hairdressers. She knew. She could see what She didn't know why he qualified for the grant so few women ever would let themselves see. She



The Ring and The Rang by J. Savoie

Hank sat quietly in the safety of his living room stretched out over an easy chair. He lived in a small trailer on the edge of the city. It was almost supper time yet Hank wasn't thinking about supper. He was focusing on the fight that would erupt when his wife came home. Every night they would compete to see who could scream the loudest. She always won. She was always on his back telling him to get a job. He read the classifieds daily, what more could he do? Hank was a small part of a large group who were very unlucky. He just couldn't keep a job for more than a month. In the past twelve months he had been a landscaper, a meat packer, a janitor and various other positions. Hank was a carpenter by trade: unfortunately not a very good one. None of this mattered now for soon his wife would walk through the door disrupting his peace of mind. He recalled a book he once read, Dr. Faustus and imagined himself selling his soul for unimaginable



wealth. These days it seemed even the devil took the poor for granted. He began to watch television when the daily lotto numbers came up. The thought of winning all that money made Hank dream and drool. He always dreamt of winning all that money but he never bought tickets. The phone rang, knocking him out of his daze.

On the fifth ring he picked up the receiver. "yeah"

"Is Mr. Pruett there please?" The young voice asked.

"speakin" he replied.

"I can see you Mr Purett." The voice said. "I'm watching you through the window."

"Who the hell is this?" Hank demanded.

He was beginning to feel a little uneasy. Paranoia set in and pictures of old enemies flashed in his mind. He didn't think he had any.

"Mr. Pruett I've got something to tell ya, listen real carefully."

"I HAVE A GUN AIMED AT YOUR FOREHEAD YOU BASTARD."

The voice screamed, shrieked and seemed to bleed the words through the receiver.

"What the fuck is this all about?" He cried.

When his breathing had gone back to normal he noticed the phone had already gone dead. He looked out the window to see if anyone was there. He began to realize that no one could have been there. The only thin peross the street was an empty green field. He sat down again feeling emotionally drained. He picked up his warm beer from the table in front of him and downed it. He wondered

now these things happened to him. One question authors could sit around and write crap, drink and smoke - and get paid to do it. She'd bet that if she always leads to another and thinking now was just too much of a strain. He was almost asleep when marked a bill she was paying her taxes with she would the front door opened. As his wife walked towards see it in his hand within a month. Then it would be gone within an hour. And he'd be smoking away. Prehim he heard the ring that signalled the bout to begin.