

High School Honorable Mention
Opinion
Story by Sarah Merrill
Grade 10

When everyone else left, I sat down.

“It’s always the quiet ones, **senor**.” Jimena, my Colombian housemaid, decided as she cleared the dirty dishes from the long, mahogany table.

“Always the quiet ones.” I agreed pensively, my eyes glazed over. Jimena’s lipstick-coated lips twisted into a sympathetic smile, and she exited the grand dining hall through the service entrance, leaving me alone with my thoughts.

What had I done to deserve this? I was a good Man, I donated a portion of my riches to charity... why had fate turned against me?

“Hugh DuMartier...” My mother would whisper every night at bedtime, her thick French accent sticking in my ears like peanut butter. “Hugh my dear, one day you are going to inherit everything.”

And inherit I did. When I turned eighteen, a good twenty years in the past, my mother and father handed over the huge sum of money they’d promised me for so many years.

“I can’t believe it’s gone. It’s all gone.” I murmured to myself, my voice choked up with materialistic tears. I had a tendency to talk to myself in times of great stress or anxiety, and today was no exception.

“Hugh. Little Hugh. Baby Hughie.” I said, my tone angrier and louder with each nickname as they fell from my mouth like pennies from a child’s piggy bank.

I was always thoughtful and observant of others. Not like my stepbrother Lucio, who always needed to be the star of the show. Right in the center of everyone’s attention. No Baby Hughie kept his opinions to himself. He knew they would get him in trouble. He didn’t have the courage to say what he thought. Until tonight, at least.

“Selfish, narcissistic toads.” I called my elderly father and his young, sharp coworkers. “Look at you know, Belle of the Ball, You’re getting a little pudgy.” I directed towards my stepbrother, Lucio, sitting beside me. His slice of quiche was left untouched after that.

“Greedy pigs.” I jeered at my mother and her menopausal friends, fierce sharks garnished with expensive jewelry.

I wiped a tear or two from my eyes and stood up, putting a happy face on for Jimena. My mother, father, and stepbrother were furious earlier tonight. All three of them. Furious at ME! That rarely happened, if ever. But, you know what they say: Often the truest insults hurt the most. In any case, my parents decided to cut me off from the money that I depended on my whole life.

What was I going to do? Certainly I couldn’t get a job, I hadn’t trained for anything back when I was young and dumb. I was always anticipating a life of shiftless luxury, a life that I’ve been living before tonight.

“I’m going to end up like Vincent.” I lamented to myself with a groan. Vincent was one of my former friends, heir to a transatlantic shipping fortune. Unfortunately, that

fortune dwindled and Vincent was left to sell all his possessions until he ended up dirty (albeit well-dressed) bum.

I was suddenly overcome with helplessness, and had to steady myself against the counter as I walked in to the kitchen, the cool granite countertop whispering sweet nothings to my clammy palm.

Jimena was gone from the room, probably folding linens and ironing my suits in the upstairs laundry room. My head spun as I considered my options. I picked up the sharp glistening Chef's knife that lie temptingly on the counter beside my hand. I turned it slowly in the light, my hand trembling. If I wasn't right, what was I? A quiet, hesitant man with no purpose...that's what I was. Little Hughie DuMartier, one grain of sand on the shoreline of the human race.

Did I have any last words? I pondered indecisively, and they came to me in a flash of bitter sarcasm.

"An opinion, an opinion...my kingdom for an opinion!" I exclaimed, the blade digging into my flesh with a peculiar numbness and my legs giving way to the spotless marble floor.