FAIRY TALES: A CONTINUOUS WORK IN PROGRESS

A thesis submitted to the
Kent State University Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for University Honors

by

Krystal Krajcovic

May, 2017
Thesis written by

Krystal Krajcovic

Approved by

______________________________________________, Advisor

______________________________________________, Chair, Department of English

Accepted by

___________________________________________________, Dean, Honors College

ii
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT ........................................................................................................ iv

SECTIONS

I. INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................. 1

II. THE ORAL TALES .......................................................................................................... 9

III. BLUEBEARD ............................................................................................................... 13

IV. BLUEBEARD: ANALYSIS .......................................................................................... 32

V. THE PIG PRINCE ......................................................................................................... 40

VI. THE PIG PRINCE: ANALYSIS .................................................................................. 54

VII. THE LITERARY TALES .............................................................................................. 62

VIII. SAND-MAN ............................................................................................................. 66

IX. SAND-MAN: ANALYSIS ........................................................................................... 83

X. MINES OF FALUN ....................................................................................................... 90

XI. MINES OF FALUN: ANALYSIS ................................................................................. 107

XII. AUTOMATA .............................................................................................................. 113

XIII. AUTOMATA: ANALYSIS ......................................................................................... 127

WORKS CITED ............................................................................................................... 134
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would really like to thank Dr. Don-John Dugas for all of his help and guidance throughout the creation of this thesis. I truly could not have created something I'm so incredibly proud of without him.

I would also like to thank Dr. Elizabeth Howard, Dr. Radd Ehrman, and Dr. Susan Sainato for taking the time to be a part of my thesis committee.

And last, but certainly not least, I need to thank Dr. Tammy Clewell for stepping in as a replacement committee member at the last minute.

I hope everyone enjoys this as much as I do.
Introduction

Scholars have defined the fairy tale in a number of ways. Some believe that they are specifically children's stories about magical and/or imaginary places. Others believe that they are idealized and happy stories. And still others believe that they are stories meant to deceive. Fairy tales do not belong to the fantasy, weird fiction, horror, or science fiction genre. They are their own entity. Although fairy tales have no true definition, they are all defined by one distinct trait: magic. Maria Warner and others have theorized that fairy tales were originally told orally by the women in a community for entertainment and then retold with embellishments added in order to outdo the last storyteller. According to folkloricist Donald Haase, the oral origin of the genre can cause us "to imagine the original tellers as simple folk endowed with infallible wisdom and, in some cases, divine inspiration" (Haase 353). Consequently, modern audiences sometimes regard "tampering with the classic texts...to be tantamount to sacrilege" (Haase 353). This tendency could not be more antithetical to fit the tradition. Fairy tales, rather, are more like living beings; they grow and adapt to new cultures and times as needed. To prevent fairy tales doing so by confining them to their pages would, according to Vladimir Propp, doom them to extinction. According to Propp, "everything that is out-of-date and incongruous with new
attitudes, tastes, and ideology will be discarded" and "will affect...what will be reworked and supplemented" as the oral tradition demands (Propp 380). Fairy tales are meant to go through "as many" retellings "as possible" as they are meant to "exist... in constant flux" (Propp 381). In other words, collecting and writing a tale down does not mean that tale is finished. Someone else inevitably will still learn and retell the tale.

For my thesis, I have chosen to study and retell five tales, most of which have fallen into obscurity in America. The first two tales, "Bluebeard" by Charles Perrault and "The Pig Prince" by Giovanni Strapparola, are oral tales. Oral tales are distinguished by a unique set of characteristics developed by their nature. Oral tales were told out loud, making them intended for a public audience, allowing the community to unite through entertainment. They are void of unnecessary descriptions, literary references, and editorializing, making them comprised only of the most necessary details to tell the story. Since these tales were told out loud, the language used to tell the tales is not as polished as a literary tales would be. The narrator tells the tale using colloquialisms. Characters in oral tales often lack names since the cast of characters only included the characters it absolutely had to.

Literary tales, in contrast, were created through the written word, making them intended for private audiences and intended to demonstrate the literary knowledge of their creators. I have chosen three literary tales, "The Sand-Man,"
"Mines of Falun," and "Automata" by E.T.A. Hoffman. These tales were originally written and were always meant to be read, making them meant for private entertainment. They were created by Hoffman for his godchildren, but the format would have allowed them to have reached a wide readership. I selected these tales for several reasons. The first is my desire to expand the number of fairy tales that are household titles. Disappointingly few fairy tales make up this canon and even fewer of them have attracted the scholarly attention necessary for my purposes. Another is that I wanted to steer clear of any fairy tale Disney has used or may use in the near future. Disney princesses have become household staples. As a result, the characteristics of the Disney protagonists have become set, thereby defying the fairy tale tradition of reinvention. More obscure tales also present a challenge. One can only assume that if the oral tales were written down that at one point they were popular. They reflected the fears, concerns, ideas, and values of that culture. Eventually, this stopped being true for all of the tales. Tales fell into obscurity because they were no longer relevant or because they could not be adapted for an appropriate audience, namely children. This thesis will build off of the tradition described by Haase by taking five tales that have fallen out of time and renewing them to make them relevant, effectively re-starting these stalled the fairy tales. Not only will these tales be brought back to life, but they will also be adapted for an older audience, breaking away from their classification as children’s literature.
Haase famously responded to this traditional need by issuing a call to action for anyone who has ever read, heard, or seen a fairy tale: "by actively selecting, discussing, enacting, illustrating, adapting, and retelling the tales they experience, both adults and children can assert their own proprietary rights to meaning" helping to affirm the fairy tale tradition of updating tales as society changes (Haase 363). The goal is to "reread and reinterpret the tales in new ways" in order to "renew the tale" (Haase 363). Haase calls on everyone to do this - teachers, students, adults, writers, anyone that has ever experienced a fairy tale. This plan asks us to reject the "growing tendency to stress private ownership," that cements them into defined roles (Haase 361). Private ownership occurs when the name of its creator becomes synonymous with the tale. For example, "Cinderella" has actually become Disney's Cinderella because it is privately owned by the Disney Company. Meanwhile, "Little Red Riding Hood" is a publicly owned tale, residing in multiple collections but not being owned by one person or organization. Being part of a collection allows the tale to continue to grow. A collection is like a home: it holds the tales in one place but they can still grow and move. Ownership restricts the tale, confining it to one role determined by one person. Instead, each of us should claim "fairy tales in every individual act of telling and reading," allowing new life to continuously be breathed into the tales by retelling and collective ownership (Haase 361). This practice denies definite ownership while allowing individuals to take ownership of the ability to
tell fairy tales back and to restore relevance to the work, thus allowing the tradition to continue.

This thesis contains creative and analytical portions. The creative portion will consist of my five tales. The analytical portion will contain an analytical component for each tale that directly relates to the retelling. The analytical portions will be paired with the tales to better organize the thesis. They can be read with the tales or after the tales.

The tales have been retold in a way that I believe will make them relevant. The characters' names have been modernized and changed so they sound familiar. Nameless characters have been named. Technology was introduced to each tale to bring it into our century. Technology has become an integral part of our everyday lifestyle so naturally the constant use and need of technology should be transferred to the characters. The tales also all take place in roughly the same location, a mythical community named Point-G. Point-G exists in a sunny location near an ocean. This helps to link all of the stories together, creating an arc that allows me to work out my theme - the tension between technology, humans, and magic. I continue to see technology potentially impacting our society in negative ways as more frivolous advancements are made. Technology seems to be eradicating magic and human life as we know it. Yet, there are human things and unexplainable, magical things that technology will never be able to truly replicate. This tension and the interruption created by technology gives the collection a
slight science fiction edge, although the retellings of the Hoffman tales are deliberately science fiction.

Each tale is formed based on the significant details from the plot, my research, and through the use of a cultural anchor. To retell a tale, I first make a list of points in each that I believe need to reoccur in order for the tale to retain important aspects of the original. Although scholarly analyses of some tales were limited, I used these to help propel my tales in the direction that best suited an unfilled need. Much of the research is critical of certain aspects of each text or offers an alternative reading suggested by a small detail. This research helped me decide which aspects of the tales to change and which to emphasize. For each tale, I also decided to pick a cultural anchor to guide it and cement the tale in a specific genre. The cultural anchor is a moment from pop culture that is important or well-known to most Americans. For my purpose, these were books, movies, ideas, and one renowned moment in history. The use of these anchors gives the tale something that is instantly relatable because it is known and helps to initially root it into our culture. The work of the Walt Disney Company also makes an impact on the retelling of these tales. Recently, Disney has been moving its fairy tale movies, such as Frozen, Brave, Tangled, and Moana away from the damsel in distress motif and into the world of active female heroines that is embodied by Mulan. I believe the new princesses offer something to be admired. I also believe that the fantastical worlds Disney is able to create through animation far
outstretch anything I have found written in fairy tales. These are both concepts that I find valuable to the world of fairy tales. The heroes and heroines have to be reworked to make them more human and more real, and the world they live in has to be somewhere we would want to go. That world does not necessarily have to be nice, instead it has to be amazing.

The analytical portion of my thesis will consist specifically of the analysis required to create the retellings I have presented. I will not be looking for underlying meanings in the tales since that does not further the creative process that I have chosen. Instead, these analyses will revolve around the important details from the texts, the way the cultural anchor was employed, and the influence of my research on my writing. The analytical portion of my thesis will also discuss significant changes I chose to make to the tales and how I think these changes impact my retelling. This portion is designed to explain my decision-making process as I created each retelling. In a way, this section outlines authorial intent, causing the exact contents to be vague despite the decisions being specific.

The most famous and reinvented retellings of fairy tales are the animated films of Walt Disney. Tales such as Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, and Peter Pan have become synonymous with the Disney name. According to Charles Zipes, when we "think of the great classical fairy tales" we "think Walt Disney" (Zipes 332). Disney made the tales relevant to his own time by bringing these tales up-to-date through the use of technology. The innovations in animation
Disney created, practiced, and perfected contributed to the revitalization of fairy tales along with their "expansion as a mass-mediated form through radio, film, and television" (333). By bringing the tales to cinema, the tales could be seen instead of just heard and imagined, creating a broader audience in the modern world. Disney's method of retelling "employed the most up-to-date technological means and [added]...American 'grit' and ingenuity to appropriate European fairy tales" (332). This break from the normal mode of storytelling created tales meant "to delight in one-dimensional portrayal and thinking" that are "adorable, easy, and comforting in" their "simplicity" (352). Disney has ruled the world of fairy tales ever since. The problem with Disney, however, is that its retellings have become so established that they defy the tradition Haase describes as necessary. By being Disney's tales, they do not belong to everyone. Moreover, Disney’s private ownership of the tales can be a deterrent to those who wish to retell them. There are, however, many other tales that have been written that are worthy of an audience, even if they are not updated using technology. The following are five tales that have not been told by Disney but are still worthy of an audience’s attention.
The Oral Tales

The oral tales I chose for my thesis are "Bluebeard" by Charles Perrault and "The Pig Prince" by Giovanni Straparola. The attributions to authors which I use are intended to indicate which transcribed version of the tale I am using. These tales do not, however, truly have authors. They originated as part of the oral tradition, meaning that they were told then retold and elaborated upon in order to outdo the last storyteller. As a result, they exist in various forms with additions and changes made by the collectors as they saw fit to draw an audience. The tales were revised to fit the needs of their respective cultures when they were set down on paper like they had constantly evolved when they had lived out loud. The drawback to having tales recorded in a literary format is that it is easier to ignore a book than it is to ignore someone speaking to you. As a result, some tales stopped being read and retold, causing them to fall into obscurity. Tales also fell into obscurity because they did not fit the image a fairy tale should take in the average household. With the rise of literary tales, children's literature was created as a genre. Some tales were not appropriate for children due to their violent or morally questionable nature. These would have required intensive revisions in order to make them child-friendly. For instance, tales like "Bluebeard" and "The Robber Bride-Groom" are extremely violent, but the violence is key to the tales, thereby
preventing simple revision. "The Pig Prince" likewise presents a problem because of the violence and bestiality the tale requires. Disney's appropriation of fairy tales also created its own canon. Tales within this canon were altered to best fit the screen for a younger audience. Through their use of technology, Disney's fairy tales became more familiar than most written tales. Disney has taken over the world of fairy tales, especially in America. Tales that do not fit into the Disney ideal or into children's literature became less well-known and fell into obscurity. The tales I have chosen fall into this category.

Oral are distinguished by a set of characteristics created by being told aloud and encumbered by excessive editing later. This process of creation not only determines the characteristics but also clearly distinguishes oral tales from the literary ones. Due to the oral nature of the tales, the language used to tell the stories reflects the dialect used by the storyteller. This means that the form of the tale is sculpted by its oral nature. Since the tales are oral, they are told using colloquialisms and heavily rely on dialogue to help move the tale along. Additionally, they tend to lack explanation for actions. Instead, magic is the force that rules the unexplainable, and the audience comes to expect that things in fairy tales just happen. Time and explanation are unnecessary. To go somewhere or do something, a character simply goes or does what they need to without a lengthy description of how this action occurred. Characters in oral tales also tend to lack names. Having a name is not necessary in these tales because the tales are so short
that being distinguished as "the girl," "the witch," or "the farmer" is enough to set one character apart from all the others. The cast of characters tend to be small as a result of this. The cast also tends to be small because storytellers included only elements that were absolutely necessary to the tale instead of creating backstories and subplots as a writer would. The tales provide only the elements needed in order to understand the tale and its meaning. The meaning of each oral tale was especially important depending on the audience. Oral tales were typically told by women while they worked for entertainment and to help teach children their values. Since they were primarily intended for entertainment, most tales did not have explicit morals attached to them. The values of the culture they were created in, however, were still engrained in each story to help younger audiences learn. After being written and adapted for children, the morals became more obvious and sometimes attached to the end to help teach children how to behave.

"Bluebeard" has been retold successfully on several occasions, although Americans do not regard this tale as being canonical. I am interested in this tale because it's not a tale commonly known to Americans from my generation. At its core, "Bluebeard" is a story about a serial killer and the work of two sisters that leads to his demise. For my version, I have used The Black Dahlia Avenger by Steven Hodell to help anchor this tale into modern American culture. The Black Dahlia is a cold case from 1942 that was largely solved in the early 2000s by the son of the possible serial killer, George Hill Hodell. It is one of the most famous
murders in American history and was even featured in an opening sequence of the first season of *American Horror Story*. My version of "Bluebeard" is a detective story that focuses on the relationship of two extremely different sisters as they discover the secret of the man who married one of them.

"The Pig Prince" appears in collections by Straparola's and the Grimms', but never achieved prominence for Anglophone readers. The most surprising aspects of Straparola's version is its humor. “The Pig Prince” is the only tale I have chosen that displays a sense of humor. The lack of scholarship for this tale prevents me from determining the definite tradition this tale displays. However, this Italian tale focuses more on light-hearted humor, scatological humor, eroticism, and has an overall "intended-for-entertainment" value to it. “The Pig Prince” provides a refreshing break from the rest of the collection I have created. "The Pig Prince" is essentially a romantic comedy. For the pop culture anchor for this tale, I chose to use Adam Sandler's later body of work, specifically *Just Go with It* and *Blended*. The humor in these films is more watered down than Sandler's early movies and revolves around the "guy-sees-girl, guy-loses-girl, guy-gets-girl" dynamic. *Just Go with It*, in particular, offers a set of three weddings, two of which fail, and the physical transformation of the male protagonist. My version of "The Pig Prince" echoes the playful humor of these films and the toned-down revenge as the story builds off the increasing use of somewhat new technology to make the pig prince possible.
Bluebeard

Anne was not in a particularly good mood despite the fact that it was a gorgeous, blue-sky morning, even by local standards. That should have been enough to make anyone smile, let alone someone who had seen nothing but rain for two months. However, Anne was not, in fact, a morning person. She had not appreciated having to catch the red-eye. The cause of this sudden flight had been her younger sister, Mary, who had made a series of decisions so horrible that Anne had no choice to believe her sister might be the biggest idiot who had ever been born.

The offenses Mary had committed (for indeed it was offensive to any living being that had two brain cells to rub together) were:

1. Consciously dating a man who was terrifying to look at. It was the beard. It was so black it was blue. And that was unnatural and just not okay. Anna had been put off by it immediately and Mary should have been too.

2. For whatever reason, someone had allowed that man become a doctor. But not just any doctor. OH NO. A doctor of the worst kind: a plastic surgeon who had managed to convince Mary that her curves were bad, her stomach was bad, her cheeks were too full, and her nose was an ugly little stub. Anne had had
more than enough of listening to her sister whine about future surgeries and the possibility of having ribs removed so she could be smaller.

3. The age-gap was ridiculous. No nineteen year old girl with her whole life ahead of her needed to be in a relationship with a 47-year-old man, even if she had dropped out of college to pursue a career as an escort. It wasn't the most legal practice she could have chosen, but it was still a step above prostitution. And it was also a hands-off business; she was getting paid to go on dates. Not that that made much of a difference to Anne. It was still a bad excuse for a career, and she had even less respect for it knowing that it was through this work that Mary had met the doctor.

4. Mary had very openly said she was just married for the money. Little gold digger.

5. The bitch had gone and eloped after three weeks.

Clearly, it was time for an intervention.

Finding her sister hadn't been difficult. Dr. Bluebeard owned several houses, but only one near Point-G. And, by abusing her power as a detective, she had gained an address and been able to survey the house from her home in her rainy city and had begun to notice a trend. The doctor left every Thursday and didn't return home until Tuesday. As if he had something on the side. Maybe, if she got really lucky, she could bust him for drugs or something because, yes, her hatred of him already ran so deep that she would have loved to throw him away
forever. It was the fastest way to a much-needed divorce. But she honestly
couldn't blame him for leaving home. It was hotter than hell in this damned state.
Only devil-spawn would live here. Oh wait. At least one did. And her idiot sister
had eloped with it.

Anne got out of the rental and strolled up to the gate as leisurely as she
could. She would have preferred Uber, but Uber was not conducive to moving her
sister back home. She tried to get her temper in check before she saw Mary.
Naturally the gate was locked and it had a fingerprint scanner. Over the top it was.

Anne jumped up on the gate and started pulling herself to the top. She had
just gotten her hand on the top bar when it swung inwards.

"HIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!!" Mary's voice rang clearly. "I had NOOOOOOOOO
idea you were coming! This is such a fun surprise! Girl, we are going to have the
party of a lifetime! And listen—the lypo you need is on the house!"

Anne fought to contain all the swear words flooding into her head.

Controlling her temper became easier though after she saw the inside of
the house. The "house" was closer to a mansion that resembled a beach house. It
was huge and spacious with high-vaulted ceilings and filled with rare art, golden
frill and clutter, state-of-the-art entertainment systems, and lavish furniture. Shells
were on the walls, tables, floors, anywhere that one could be set and left safely.
The inside was blue and tan, like the beach, creating a warm golden glow that
Anne could feel suffocating her. Small statues of Greek goddesses carved out of
marble were reverently placed throughout the room. There were several floors
decorated like this. Or so Anne assumed. From the outside, she could see that the
house had at least five floors, but Mary wasn't exactly being the most welcoming
hostess but rather was standing in her bikini, her new fake body on display,
golden in its earthy, wooden home, while she happily gaped at her sister.

"Don't worry. We'll get rid of all that leftover belly-fat you don't need, plus
a couple ribs. You'll be irresistible!" Mary chirped. Anne had decided to hate the
doctor even more for turning her sister into a walking commercial.

Anne had been watching the transformation of her sister online for a
couple months now. It had started as abruptly as the wedding had happened.
Within two days of announcing her marriage, Mary had posted a picture of herself
with her new nose. The tip was significantly smaller than it had been in its past
rounded, button life, and it was flipped upwards to such an extent that it only
barely managed to stay in the realm of reality. In truth, Anne had immediately
thought her sister was starting to resemble a Who and had expected her to make
her annual Christmas appearance twice as jolly as usual. Christmas had been only
a month off. Instead, however, what Mary had decided to do to celebrate her new
nose was to plan to have her belly fat significantly reduced on December 23,
which left her unfit to travel. Mary hadn't needed the liposuction to begin with.
She had always been incredibly slim compared to her sister. But she had been
taught to hate the way the fat rounded her out ever so slightly, preferring instead
to count the bones in her body as they'll each began to make an appearance through her skin. Post-operation, she just looked unhealthy, despite very clearly displaying a robust appetite with the various food pics that continued to appear on Instagram. A week later, Mary had had her neck liposuctioned, to make her collarbone more prominent. Three days after that she had her cheekbones raised. Mary had stopped looking like herself, but also Mary had stopped talking like herself. Prior to marrying her devil doctor she would have never commented on Anne's body. And now she was worried about their rib counts? And how to lower them? That was the real reason Anne had to be there. To stop Mary before the plastic surgery finally took its final toll on her health. Nobody was meant to live with fewer ribs. Who did she think she was? Barbie?

But Anne didn't say that. Instead, she chose to tread lightly. Better to get her sister on her side than attack her upfront with a series of accusations that would ultimately work only to her disadvantage.

"So, are you going to give me the full tour?" She asked matter-of-factly.

"Sure."

Anne got a nearly full tour. The house was massive. There were more rooms and more floors than the couple appeared to know what to do with. The house was spacious, a fact that was emphasized by the open windows that allowed the sea-breeze to waft in and fill the upper floors. Mary babbled excitedly about how she was planning to decorate each one, pointing out pictures she'd tacked to
the walls and paint blotches. The blue and tan was beginning to make its way through the other floors. Anne took it all in quietly. Mary showed everything off loudly. She had an unlimited budget and she intended to use every cent of it. The tour and the talking didn't end until they were back on the ground floor in the living room.

"So, that's it," Mary shrugged, flopping onto the couch.

"What about the basement?"

"What about it?"

"Do you have one?"

"Yeah."

"Shouldn't that be included in the tour?"

"No."

"No?"

"Well. I can't."

"Why?" Anne said flatly.

"I don't want to."

"Why?" Her tone hardened.

"Because, like, it's just all black, and it's really boring and dingy, and I hate it, and the lights don't work, and there's a room down there I'm not allowed to go in. Anyway, that door’s locked. So. No."
Anne snorted. Her sister being banned from part of her house was disturbing. That wasn't what she found funny. It was a downright caveman-level action that an intelligent, trustworthy human being would not have felt the need to do. It was pathetic. What she found funny was the thought that the doctor felt that he could keep her or anyone else out with a simple lock. She was going to get into that room. And she felt she could push Mary into thinking about going in to.

"That doesn't bother you at all?" Anne asked.

"What?"

"Being locked out of part of your home?"

"It's not really my home."

"You're married! It is too!"

"Whatever. Then, no. I guess not."

"Don't you even want to know what's in them?"

"Not really. I've got everything I need right here. Plus some. And it's officially in the will that everything will be mine once he croaks, you know. So I'm good. I'm pretty sure I can stand not knowing a one or two small things if it means I get to have all of this in a few years."

Anne died a little inside. Mary had always wanted to be a trophy wife. It was her highest ambition in life, and, as depressing as it was, she had achieved it.

"I'm not sure you've ever said anything so stupid," Anne said in her best 'it's-for-your-own-good' voice.
Before Mary could reply, Anne began to make her way across the room to the stairs.

"You bitch!" Mary exploded. "The least you could do is be happy for me! At least ONE of us is married and living in the lap of luxury while you're just-just-working."

"I'd rather work than be trapped on the first floor of this place!"

"It's beautiful!"

"It’s tacky."

The statement struck Mary to her core, but she really couldn't disagree and she really couldn't think of a comeback.

"You're just jealous! Because I'm finally doing so well in life! You're just acting like you're better than me! And pretending to take care of me! You wish I wasn't doing anything with my life so you could save me! Right?! Well?! Wait. What are you doing?"

"I am going to break the door down and go downstairs," Anne said very calmly. She was only so calm because she had been beating her shoulder against the door and hadn't heard a word of what Mary was saying. Had she heard, she would've been using Mary's head as the battering ram and still probably have to explain her actions.

"You can't do that! You don't have a warrant!"
"I don't need a warrant! I'm older than you and last time I checked that means I can do what I want. And right now what I want is to go upstairs and check for decomposing bodies and frankensteined together monsters. So I'm going to do that."

"You don't know that there's anything dead up there." Mary was beginning to pout, adding to the list of reasons why Anne thought 19 was too young to marry.

"How do you know there isn't?"

"Well."

"Don't even begin to say you trust him. I did a background check. You are wife number seven. The five before you all disappeared under mysterious circumstances and still have not been found... alive or otherwise. The first is living life to the fullest in Rio."

"You can do that?"

Anne faltered for a second. Technically she wasn't supposed to do that. But these were desperate times. Desperate enough to make her do something that could cost her her job. Her gut told her that there was nothing good about this marriage and she couldn't ignore that. But mostly she couldn't ignore just how sick it was making her sister. It was the time to act. Probably past time. And she was in too deep now to pull out.

"Yep." Anne answered.
"But that doesn't mean there are bodies downstairs."

"True. Your husband could be keeping a boyfriend down there along with all sorts of stuff to have adult male fun with."

She assumed that would hit Mary particularly hard. Mary had never been much for sharing, despite her offer to have her sister’s body vandalize, too. Also, Anne doubted that was a real possibility, but it was the first alternative she'd come up with.

Mary's jaw hit the floor. She grabbed a small silver key out of an ornate, lapis bowl and ran up the stairs with it to her sister. If there was someone she had to share with, she needed to know. So that she could blackmail that worthless SOB into a vacation in the Mediterranean for a few months to flaunt her new bod and meet some men who were worth spending time with. This marriage may have just been for the money, but like hell she was going to share it.

"Just don't break the door. He can't know," she said handing over the key.

"This was all you ever had to do to prevent that."

Anne put the key in the lock and opened the door. The basement was very dark, but appeared to be just a hallway leading to a dark, almost hidden door. The walls on both sides held nothing but tastefully lit portraits. As the sisters walked along the hall, Anne noticed the pictures were all of the same woman: wife Number 1. It was a shrine, all-consuming as the pictures wrapped around them on the walls and winding towards a door. Anne shivered. Clearly, the doctor was
obsessed with his first wife who, as she had found out through her research, had divorced him and taken a good deal of his money with her. And then he had built a monument to her.

"I'll murder him with my two bare hands," Mary hissed.

They continued through the hallway, surrounded by the pictures, deeper into the shrine. The wife looked a little different in the photos but the walls were still covered with them.

"What the hell?" Anne voiced quietly.

"That bitch has my nose!" Mary whined.

Anne looked at the photos a little closer. It was uncanny how similar Mary's new nose was to the wife's. More disturbing was the fact that Anne wasn't entirely sure that she was looking at pictures of only one woman. There were differences between the pictures that she wasn't sure could have been successfully faked: different hairlines, the hands, foot size, height. The eye color varied slightly from photo to photo. Each smile varied slightly, too. Teeth had different alignments. Some smiles were crooked. The lips were all the same, though. Like they all been photo-shopped from wife Number 1 onto each of what Anna could only assume at this point were the other five wives. Was it possible that Dr. Blue-beard had only married one type of woman? That his taste in appearances was so damned specific? Or had he...?
Anne turned and looked at her sister. She had the same nose. A new nose that was the same. She had the same basic build, but it was new. And it wasn't quite thin enough to match the photos. Her waist would have had to be more refined. But she was almost physically the same in her newly altered form as the first wife. She was physically the same as the five in between them as well thanks to her new form. Her newly, heavily, plastically altered form.

"Bitch," Mary said that the picture she was facing. "Stealing my nose."

"I think she had it first, Mare." Anne grimaced. Mary was hooked on plastic surgery all so some guy could continually remake the wife who had left him over ten years ago exactly the way she had looked then. He was obsessed and in the midst of this obsession had created an addict.

"I don't care!" Mary pointed at the beach picture she was facing. "But she does have good taste. See this is what I want done. I want my waist to look like that. You see, that's why I HAVE to have two ribs removed on each side."

Anne's last bit of self-restraint snapped. There was not going to be any "having to have" on her watch. There weren't going to be any incisions. There wasn't going to be any sort of removal of anything. Mary could cry and whine about it later through a mouth full of chocolate frosting and wine, but she was most absolutely not going to have any more surgery. And she wasn't going to get to have even a second to comment on it. She was going to have her ass dragged
out of this house and away from Dr. Bluebeard long before she could end up like
the others. Altered beyond repair. Altered beyond recognition. And then just gone.

"Okay. It's time to go!" Mary attempted to herd Anne back up the stairs.

"You go. I'm going to see what's down there."

"No. We need to leave now. I don't want to be here anymore."

Mary stopped moving. She looked absolutely defeated. The reality of her
plastic appearance began to settle in. Anne began to feel some sympathy for her
sister.

"Look. Why don't you go pack up while I take a look in this room? This is
all clearly too much for you. I'll take care of it"

"There you go again. I am not your responsibility. I am an adult. I can take
care of myself. And if I'm not going in, you're not going in either."

"Only in a legal sense are you an adult."

Anne slid under her sister's arms, strode past her, unlocked the door, and
descended another staircase into darkness. Mary reluctantly followed. There were
no lights. Not even little ones under pictures. The stairs stopped. The girls lurched
forward onto a narrow landing. They saw a faint blue light barely illuminating
another set of stairs suddenly heading down further. Anne and Mary slowly
descended back into the light, instinctively holding hands.

The glow was coming from the row of tubes lining the back wall. Each
tube extended upwards from its base about six feet and was two feet wide. The
majority of the tubes were empty. Only five had something floating in the midst of the blue glowing plasma that was emitting the otherworldly lighting. It felt like they had left the house and somehow stepped into another world that somehow existed within their own. The light reached out to them, drawing the girls like moths. The girls walked closer to the tubes. It was easy to. They were the only discernible objects in the room. The floaters slowly came into focus, their appendages becoming clearer. Arms. Legs. Feet. Tiny, too tiny waists. Hair, messy and tangled in the goo. Hair green in the light of the goo despite whatever color it may have been before. Soon the faces became discernible. The cheekbones high. The noses tipped upward almost too much and ever-so-tiny in the tip. Eyes forced open from the pressure. Blue-green in tone—everything about each floater was blue-green in tone. They were gaunt and otherworldly, but clearly dead. Dead and floating in their little glass tubes like sick artwork on display. But they stopped before they got too close, as soon as the floaters became recognizable and they could read each label.

Wife 2. Wife 3. Wife 4. Wife 5. Wife 6. Each almost an exact mirror image of the prior. All made in the image of the original. Each was in a different pose. Wife 2 had her arms folded over her head creating horns. Wife 3’s hands were folded into fists and lifted up above her shoulders as if she had grown two more heads. Wife 4's legs were pressed tightly together with her feet spread apart like a fin. Thin gashes could be seen on her neck. Wife 5 was bronze colored and her
hair was coated in something that at one point could have been red. Two sharpened teeth poked out over her bottom lip. Wife 6's hair was draped over her face. One hand was pressed against the glass and the other pointed down. The numbers were etched on a large scale onto each tube, as if to label the Wives as five distinct separate failures of experimentation.

And the next empty tube had a giant 7 etched into the glass to match.

"Mary. We need to go."

"I need to know what else is here."

"No you don't."

The girls hadn't moved too far away from the back wall, where the stairs were located. Mary let go of Anne's hand and made her way back to the stairs, sliding her hand along the wall, looking for a switch. Anne pressed herself back against the wall, her courage beginning to fail as the full realization of what else the room could contain settled in. The light flicked on.

In the middle of the room was an operating table. It was surrounded with gadgets and objects that Mary couldn't name but was sure belonged only in an operating room. Anne couldn't name them either. But they struck every nerve she had. She glanced over the operating table, looking at the airtight container filled with long, thin metal objects. Tools of the trade, Anne was sure. Scalpels and scissors and knives, to cut up the wives. Needles and nitrous gas, to help each surgery smoothly pass. Hoses and saws, the girls would need gauze. Here each
wife would end her life. The thought of why a person would need a laboratory in a secret part of their house sent shivers down her spine. She was willing to bet that the surgeries had happened here. In this very white room. Bleached and cleaned afterwards to hide any trace of use. The tubes somehow hidden from their sister Wife, as if they were the audience to a sort of game show where the options were to fully conform or die trying. Anne's head spun. Had Mary been in here before? Or was this where the final surgery was performed? Whichever one took the lives from Wives 2 through 5?

Had it been because of the ribs?

Anne considered the question for a moment. Then stopped. It didn't matter if it had been because of rib surgery or not. What mattered was that that was the alteration her sister was missing. It was time to leave before Mary had it done, before she possibly joined the other Wives in their trophy case. They had to leave now.

"Mary."

"I know. I'm coming."

Anne stepped onto the staircase and began to climb back into the darkness. Mary hit the lights and took one last look at the girls in the tubes, instinctively running a hand over her waist and touched the tip of her nose. For a brief second she considered having it reversed. Then decided she should keep it as much as she
suddenly hated each and every change. Mary ascended the staircase. Yes, she would keep her changes. And coming out of that room she felt truly changed.

The girls wound their way back through the hall of Wives, past and back up into the main room of the first floor. Mary shut the door behind her, leaving the little, silver key in the lock. They were back upstairs where they had been told they belonged. Mary shifted away from the door.

"I'm going to pack," she whispered.

"I'll wait here."

Mary left the room. Anne stayed behind. And then the doctor entered.

"Would you like to tell me why my key is in your hand when that room is my private property?"

Anne hesitated. Then chose to run instead of respond. It was fight or flight, and she had made her choice. To fly right up the stairs. The doctor followed almost as quickly although he was only walking. Anne glanced over her shoulder. She could see the beard. Only the beard. The blue consumed his whole face. She kept running. She didn't know where to, though. She didn't know exactly why, either. But the thought of the Wives in their tubes and knowing she could be changed beyond recognition and mounted in goo along with the rest of them consumed her mind. She could end up in number 7 with Mary in number 8. So she kept running, away from everything the doctor represented and, in a way, away from what she had seen. Yet she was running back towards the Wives.
Eventually she'd reach the end of the halls in that room where she knew she'd be at a disadvantage.

"Anne, I'm ready to go," Mary's voice rang clearly.

Both Anne and the doctor stopped. Anne hadn't been expecting her sister to talk. She hadn't been expecting her sister to betray their plan. They were supposed to slip away unobtrusively, eventually severing the connection, in a way that only the living could. Not silently; not entirely. But intelligently, allowing actions to speak for themselves. She was going to end up getting herself killed like the others by announcing the end of the connection like that. She'd be put in a glass tube and be stuck, a dead mannequin for the use of some pervert psychopath. The doctor hadn't been expecting it either and for a moment the rage on his face from having his secret found out was replaced with panic knowing that someone was going to leave the house with his secret. But only for a moment. Then the rage returned, and he whipped around and began to make his way quickly back towards the first floor.

What happened next is still officially undetermined. Anne remembered panicking and hitting his shoulder blades with both fists. Then the doctor fell down the stairs. Limbs stuck out at funny angles. His head was bent at an unnatural angle. When the police arrived they found the house burned to the ground, the cause of which was never determined. Six bodies were found in the building; five females and one male, burned beyond recognition. Mary and Anne
went home, no questions asked. Mary received her full inheritance and treated her sister to a life of luxury. The two traveled and finally settled down in a little cottage in the middle of the woods in a quiet, rainy state far away from the state that was comparable to hell. Anne went back to being a police officer, but pushed official policy to the side as often as she could. She felt like she had done more good that way than she had playing by the rules. Anne married a veterinarian her sister set her up with, thoroughly shocked by her sister’s apparent good taste in men after her fiasco of a marriage, and Mary paid for both the wedding and the honeymoon. The happy couple moved back into the cottage with Mary. Mary, on the other hand, decided to embrace her new-found independence. She opened a yoga studio and read and painted and soaked in life until her dead husband’s money was about to run out. Then she put herself through college and got a degree in criminal psychology. She had to know why. Besides she didn't really think that there was anyone else who could possibly do a better job. She was finally happy on a deep level.
Bluebeard: Analysis

"Bluebeard" by Charles Perrault is a story about a girl who falls for a rich man with a hideous blue beard. He overcomes her reservations through a display of wealth, not love, and the two marry. He tells her he is leaving her at home alone while he goes on a business trip. She can go in any room she wants except one, but he gives her the keys to all of them. The girl throws a massive party, showing off her home and all of the riches it's filled with. In the middle of the party, she finally gives into temptation and opens the forbidden room to find a bloody chamber filled with the decomposing bodies of her husband's past wives. When he comes home the following day, he finds out his wife has betrayed him and threatens to kill her by chopping her head off with a cutlass. She calls on her sister, Anne, for help, who calls for their brothers. The brothers rush in, kill the man, and the girl inherits the entire estate. She uses her wealth to give her brothers promotions and guarantee good marriages for her sister and herself.

One of the most important components of the tale is the relationship between the two sisters. Anne – simply referred to as the “sister” here - makes an appearance at the beginning to turn down the man because she could not "bring" herself "to marry a man with a blue beard" (Perrault 144). Later, she returns to help her sister at the end of the tale when the younger sister "cried out to her from
time to time" in order to receive help (146). Although she plays a small role in the 
original tale, her assistance is critical if the younger sister is going to be able to 
avoid death at the hands of Bluebeard. Rose Lovell-Smith argues that, although 
Anne "is quite unnecessary to the story and unmentioned for much of it," she is 
"essential to the heroine's escape" (Lovell-Smith 197). She also recognizes that 
the appearance of Anne "reminds us that the bride does still have a birth family 
whose responsibility for her has not been entirely abrogated by the 
marrige" (198). The family tie breaks apart the marriage. Additionally, the 
recurrence of the female helper in fairy tales is a tradition, making Anne "too 
good a character to waste" (200). Although other retellings have allowed "female 
characters [to] come into their own," other tales have focused not the relationship 
of the sisters (198). The tradition, along with the clear indication of the familial 
tie, indicates that the appearance and action of the sister is possibly one of the 
most important details from the original tale. The relationship provides an 
interesting dynamic, but is not plausible in a modern retelling. Anne most likely in 
a modern context would not be so disconnected from her sister that she would 
disappear from her life throughout the duration of her marriage without any form 
of contact until the younger sister needed help. Anne is able to maintain some 
form of communication in my tale. By maintaining communication through social 
media, the tale is able to revolve around the "rescue" of the younger sister, Mary,
demanding attention to be drawn to the relationship of the sisters instead of pushing this into a minute detail.

The relationship and agency of the sisters is reaffirmed through the decision to omit the brothers as hero figures. In Perrault's tale, the brothers enter the country house. Bluebeard tries to flee, "but the two brothers were so hot in pursuit that they trapped him...plunged their swords through his body and left him for dead" (Perrault 147). All the one sister can do is "rise and embrace her brothers" (147). Although the original rescue still provides the familial tie, it leads to the absence of the older sister once again. She only acts enough to call for help and serve as a look-out, but not enough to save her sister, even though without Anne no rescue would occur. By eliminating the brothers, Anne is able to stay and rescue her sister herself. It reinforces the relationship of the girls, but it also gives them the ability to take on the action for themselves. Anne, in my retelling, is present for the discovery of the chamber, Bluebeard's return, his death, and her sister's rescue. The girls actively take on the secrets of the chamber and the husband together, instead of effectively disappearing as soon as the men appear. The omission of the brothers allows the sisters to step forward and become more dynamic.

As stated earlier, "Bluebeard" is basically a story about a serial killer. So, the creation of the serial killer was essential to the retelling of this tale. In order to highlight the aspect of the doctor, I used one of the most famous cold cases of all
time, the Black Dahlia, as a cultural anchor for this tale. The Black Dahlia was probably solved in the early 2000s by Steven Hodel and his findings were published in *The Black Dahlia Avenger*. In it, he concludes that George Hodel, his father and a brilliant surgeon, was responsible for the killing and display of several women and may be responsible for more cold cases (Hodel 520-22).

Perhaps the most distinguishable characteristic of Hodel's work was that his son recognized that the killings "were no real butcher job. The only person who could have performed...so perfectly had to be a doctor, a skilled doctor" (128). The idea of a perfect cut or change instead of a bloody mangled corpse is terrifying in its sterility. I decided to apply that characteristic to my killer, the doctor. He took on the role of a plastic surgeon, giving him knowledge about the anatomy of a body, what he could do to it, and how best to preserve it in traditional Bluebeard style.

George Hodel had his hidden room in Franklin House, and my version of Bluebeard would have his chamber, filled with everything he would need to work on his wives, in his beach house.

The bloody chamber is the most famous feature and symbol of the tale. It holds the secrets of the husband that he most wishes for his wives to not know. In Perrault's version, the chamber is dark, but in the darkness the girl is able to make out that "the floor was clotted with blood and that the blood reflected the bodies of several dead women hung up on the walls (these were all the women Bluebeard had married and then murdered one after another)" causing the girl to think "she
would die of fright" (Perrault 145). The appearance of the chamber is not as important as its contents. The bodies of the former wives are what creates the impact, even though the overall appearance of the room contributes to the initial fear. According to Shula Barzilai, the room serves to force the girl into admitting that her husband has terrible secrets she "cannot claim ignorance of the scandal...even if the particulars are...unknown to her" (Barzilai 106). The significance of the room is demonstrated through the truth embodied by the women there, not necessarily that the room displays them, the same way the photo album George Hill Hodel kept holds the truth about the Black Dahlia in the pictures he chose to save (Hodel 42-43). The part of the original description that would no longer be believable in a modern context is the amount of blood and decomposition. Theoretically, this would emit an odor, which would immediately draw the wife's attention, negating the period of marital trust and removing the need for her sister to come save her. So, my retelling has a room with the bodies on display, but the room is sterilized to help hide its own existence.

The bodies on display adds a fetishized element to the tale. The bodies are displayed in a way that makes them feel "frozen in time like pictures mounted on walls" creating "artwork in the forbidden chamber" (Kim 411). Katherine J. Kim says that the purpose of the display is so Bluebeard can "repetitively relive punishing and dominating women" (411). Steve Hodel makes a similar statement about George Hodel's victims. Hodel believes that the "the killer" went through
"such extraordinary lengths to 'pose' the victim" in order to replicate much loved artwork created by his close friend, the famous photographer, Mann Ray (Hodel 241). In this case, George Hodel took on a "role as a surreal artist" making sure "that his work would be a masterpiece of the macabre, a crime so shocking and horrible it would endure, be immortalized through the annals of crime lore" (241). Similarly, Bluebeard puts the bodies of his wives on display to be viewed as a testimony to his work. The bodies have to be in the chamber, and they have to be artistically displayed. Although the gore is toned down in my retelling, the effect is meant to be the same. The overall appearance of the women lends to the creation of the art. Hodel's massacres relied on his taste in women. For the most part, all of the women George Hodel was married to, dated, and murdered resembled one another. The women were all "exotically Eurasian" and "vividly beautiful dark-haired" women (40). The photos of George Hodel's wife, his ex-lover, and Elizabeth Short, the Black Dahlia, all closely resemble one another (Hodel 38-41). In Hodel's case, the victims resembled his wives. In "Bluebeard," the victims are the past wives. In the original tale, the appearance of the women and the amount of decay is left to the imagination of the reader. I decided to preserve the bodies to emphasize the appearance of the women in their frozen art form besides in the photos lining the walls. All the wives look almost exactly the same, having been modified by the doctor and truly match once they are fixed in
their chambers. The murders committed by Bluebeard are not merely killings, they are meant to be viewed as art.

The magic in the tale is commonly thought to be linked with the key that opens the room. The key is clearly enchanted to always show the truth. It shows the wife her mutilated predecessors her husband had hid, and shows her husband her secret. The key proves its enchantment when after it's dropped in the chamber and is covered in blood. The wife tries to clean it and "scrub it with sand and grit" but "the bloodstain would not come off because...nothing could clean it completely" (Perrault 146). Similarly, the secret room is magical. The room holds its magic in the way it preserves the women and for a moment stops time the same way a piece of art or a photograph does. The enchantment of the room does not simply tell the truth but also holds the past frozen in the present. This allows the secret to stay alive and the wife to have a chance to discover it.

"Bluebeard" has a happy ending despite being such a dark tale. Bluebeard is slain by the brothers, and his widow comes into a large inheritance that she uses to "buy commissions for her two brothers," arrange "a marriage between her sister Anne and a young gentleman whom she had been in love with for a long time," and "to marry herself to a very worthy man" (Perrault 147-48). In my version, there are two key differences from the text. The first is the death of Bluebeard. In my tale, the true cause of death is left somewhat ambiguous. Traditionally in "Bluebeard" retellings, however, "the villain dies by the sword or by
fire" (Barzilai 114). To uphold this tradition, the house at the end of my tale, catches on fire as if by magic, leaving only the charred, disfigured remains of the doctor and his dead wives, as foreshadowed by the hell-like state the doctor lived in. I also made an addition to the rewards at the end. Both of the sisters get married, however, I give the younger sister something else. By being a trophy wife, Mary denies herself the ability to really do anything, since trophy wife status is defined by not even having to cook or clean in your own home. So I decided to give Mary a purpose, something she could do for her, and have her open a yoga studio and take up her old hobbies from before the marriage. In making this change, I hope to have established a more realistic version of the feminist in Mary. Likewise, I believe the changes I have made to the original tale are important in reinventing the female identity provided in Perrault's "Bluebeard" and updating the female characters into modern American women.
The Pig Prince

Once upon a time, in the mythical land of Acirema, lived a wealthy, upper class, married couple. They were very much in love with one another. "Very much in love" in this case means that the two somewhat newlyweds cheated on each other only when they absolutely had to because their partners were boring them, which was actually okay because they had an open relationship so each act was only kind of cheating. At least that was what the wife told herself each time she cheated during the two years she'd been married. The husband, on the other hand, was not bothered at all by their promiscuity. The one thing that did upset the couple was that, despite the wide variety of partners the two of them had, neither of them could seem to be able to bring a child into the world. The wife could not get pregnant, husband's help or not. Likewise, despite the number of times (and women) he tried, no pregnancy resulted.

Consequently the two of them did the only reasonable thing an incredibly wealthy couple could do when they wanted a baby but couldn't have one: they went to a clinic and had a test-tube baby designed for them. They used the latest in baby-planning-software-technology to design every physical aspect of their son to ensure he would be the most beautiful child possible. While they were happily designing, the clinic reported that they couldn't possibly conceive a child. The clinic sent them away, refusing the large amount of money the couple would have
been willing to pay for the privilege of trying. Unphased, they tried another clinic. Once again, they were told there was no way they could conceive a child, even with the state-of-the-art technology. The couple tried bribing the clinic with a small fortune once again, but were turned away again. The husband, however, refused to leave without at least learning of a place where they could have a child made for them. There was only one option left. It wasn't an option that they were comfortable with it, but it was their last option, so they took it.

The couple went to a small white house at the end of an old, forgotten street. It disgusted them. The paint was peeling. The grass was long. The plants were overgrown. It didn't belong. They knocked at its worn-out, little door and an old man almost instantly answered. He matched the house. He was disheveled. His hair was too long. He was obviously near-sighted. The wife thought he looked like a wizard. He yanked them inside, ushered them into a little dilapidated living room, and shoved them into an old couch whose cushions had burst. He didn't speak. He just stared at them with crazy eyes and gestured for them to begin. The husband handed him their file. And, after barely glancing at it, the old man started nodding emphatically. They had found someone to make them a child.

They left the meeting happy not even an hour later. Their money had been well-spent. The man was happy, too. He threw himself into his work in the little, home-made lab in his garage, going out of his way to work his magic and create a baby for them. In his spare time, as he waited for the centrifuge finish its cycle,
absent-mindedly stitched extremely well-loved stuffed animals back together for the baby he now thought of as his godson. But mostly he just synthesized the baby at lightning speed. He did everything in his power to make it perfect for this particular couple. He was responsible for its growth and its future adaptation. He tried to nurture it as best as he could. He played cartoons in Spanish and read "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," "Matilda," and "The BFG" simultaneously. He spent far more time working in this than tending to his molecules. Babies needed to be loved and cared for throughout the process. This he knew for a fact. Babies also needed to be physically cared for before birth but that was what everything else was for. He had stirred the components together, and now he would take care of it for the short time the baby took to form.

But once the child was fully developed, the old man realized that something hadn't quite worked during the early phase of the creation process. Somewhere, somehow he had goofed, possibly because he had taken breaks to eat and sleep instead of just responding to the whims of the parents. You see, creation wasn't an exact science. It required something more, something otherworldly. The wizard-man had supplied that, bending the rules as he went. Some of the babies came out prodigies; this one came out a piggy-faced freak. He only had limited control of the process, but usually the creative force turned out that the child fit the parents and reflected their wishes.
The new parents lamented. Their son was a pig. Not actually, but close enough looks-wise that his appearance drove them over the edge. So far over the edge that the father took to cocaine, alcohol, and an extra apartment for his lady loves while mom threw herself headlong into a health-food, yoga, lesbian-lover phase. She finally felt fulfilled, though, and the father was happy for her for that. She didn't necessarily approve of his choices since there was now a baby in the penthouse. So, despite needing as much help as possible, she encouraged him to spend as much time out and about doing whatever with whoever as much as he pleased. They got along swimmingly. But the penthouse was still a ridiculous environment for a child to grow up in. His parents obviously had some growing up to do themselves, and their problem was intensified by the fact that the young boy had a tiny, curly tail, a snub of a pig nose, and ears that were ever-so-floppy. There wasn't very much parental presence to begin with, but what little he received was colored with the substance-addled and/or well-meaning - but incoherent - comments about his physical appearance. The boy wasn't exactly horrible to look at, however. He definitely had some physical malformations ("challenges" his therapist repeated), otherwise he resembled the original design his parents paid for, for the most part. The sad mother had asked for a little baby fairy tale prince for herself. As a result, the boy was slim with brown hair, blue eyes, and the chubby little cheeks of a cherub. Not that any of those physical features helped to distract from the pig features, but they were still what the
mother ordered, even if there were days when she questioned her decision. It wasn't that she didn't love her baby. She just worried about him. She worried that growing up with so many physical challenges would be difficult, and there wasn't a single thing she could think of to help him or keep him safe. All she could do was do her best to raise him into a good, kind-hearted young man.

The situation improved after his father got himself arrested. The pig-boy was never told why, and he didn't care enough to learn. What he did care about was that, without his father, his relationship with his mom (and her steady girlfriend) had flourished without the older male influence in the penthouse. Mom and Mom-Karen took interest in him, his interests, and his grades. They began to look into surgery to try to correct the malformations (challenges) he had, but no doctor would touch him. Every cosmetic surgeon had more pressing cases to address. The mom thought about the little wizard-man for a split second and decided not to look. Not worth it.

The best part, though, was that the pig-boy finally stopped being just the boy of the family. He was finally Troy. He had had to earn the right to his name. Troy had to fight the urge to use third person. He just liked to say that he was Troy because Troy finally had a name and it was Troy (or it might be "narcissism" as his therapist suggested). Along with his name came confidence ("narcissism" the therapist would correct). Troy made a friend, Meldina, who was his downstairs neighbor. He also began online dating. His mothers encouraged him to
eat kale and take up sports. He ignored them, preferring to eat like a pig and spend all of his time indoors. He was confident, but he wasn't stupid. He felt better about himself, but that didn't mean others accepted him. Only Meldina. Meldina understood him enough to come upstairs and stay in with him. Who helped him swipe on Tinder? Who fed her kale to the dog during dinner when she ate at Troy's? And who got him to exercise indoors since he wouldn't go outside?

Troy was doing better. Meldina was okay. Mom and Mom-Karen were in love. Mom had really begun to put her life together. She had learned to cook (a little), she was exercising (a lot), working outside of the house (the absolute bare minimum to make Karen and, secretly herself, happy), and had become very attentive to Troy. It had been her idea for him to go to therapy so that he could talk his way through his problems (because girls always want to talk). And she had realized that sometimes the best way to love and care for her son was to allow him to make his own mistakes and just be there for him afterwards. She became passive but was strong in his life, and he felt like there couldn't possibly have ever been a better mom. Dad was in prison, but he wasn't missed. Life was pretty good.

But Troy was still unhappy. He turned eighteen and decided that the only way to gain some happiness was to get married. Finding a bride was going to be a struggle because of his physical "challenges," but he thought he could get a girl to love him if he tried hard enough. Troy dated entirely online, much to both of his moms' and Meldina's dismay. He was hiding behind a screen, they said. Looks
didn't matter, they said. The right girl will love you no matter what, they said. Troy couldn't have disagreed more.

"If looks don't matter then why are you insisting that I meet these girls in person? They can get to know the real me this way. The part of me that's inside without having the outside negating any of the good in my life."

"You're not actually dating," Meldina insisted.

"That's not what that means," Mom insisted, breaking her role for an instant. Sometimes she gave him a nudge in what she considered the right direction. Usually he didn't listen. (Boys.)

He continued not to listen. Two weeks later he met a girl. He swore he loved her. They sent messages back and forth every second of every day for two weeks. He suggested they elope. She hesitated - a natural reaction considering she had never met him. But Troy's online (and real) persona was charming, smart, and polite, even if he was physically challenged, and he won her over. They planned their makeshift wedding with an appointment in thirty minutes, and headed for the courthouse. Troy threw on his favorite sweatshirt and pulled the hood over his head to hide his deformities (challenges) and made his way to the door.

"You're leaving," mom said. Troy had never left before.

"I'm getting married," he replied, beaming, in the doorway.

"Troy, that's not going to happen."

"Why?"
"Because you weren't really dating this girl. You've never met."

"Yes I am."

"Honey, have you two seen each other at all?"

"Messages with descriptions. Duh."

Mom sighed.

"Fine. You're an adult. Make your own mistakes or prove me wrong. We're having yams and tofu for dinner."

"Not a mistake," Troy yelled over his shoulder as he ran out the door. "Set another place for dinner. You'll see. It'll all work out."

"Sure thing, sweetie. See you then."

The conversation struck him as weird. His mother wasn't normally so negative when he offered an idea about what he wanted out of life. He wondered for a split second if she was right, if perhaps she was using that "tough love" he'd heard about on TV but hadn't actually experienced. Then he realized he didn't care. He was getting married and everything was going to work out perfectly.

It didn't.

By the time Troy made it to the courthouse, his girl had met four other guys in person, guys he could not compete with aesthetically. Still, Troy had believed that their love would be able to pass this test. But he was sorely mistaken. Instead of saying "I do," she said "I don't" but said she knew he'd be okay, "because one day he'd make someone really happy." Troy didn't know how
to respond, considering she had just shoved a knife through his back, then ripped it back out, only to turn around and use it to pry apart his ribs and rip out his heart. So, he shook her hand and told her goodbye. He wanted to walk home, but took an Uber to avoid as many people as possible.

Still wanting to be alone, he took all twenty flights of stairs back up to the penthouse. The attempt failed, however, because he found Meldina reading on the stairs.

"Hey, gloomy," she said.

"Hi."

"What's for dinner?"

"Yams and tofu."

"Ew."

"I'll order a pizza later."

Meldina followed him up the stairs since he hadn't bothered to stop to chat.

"Pizza sounds great. What's wrong?"

"I got dumped at the altar."

Meldina's jaw dropped.

"Don't say it," Troy said.

"But I thought you—oh my."

"Guess I'll just have to try again."
"But in person this time, right Troy?"

"It doesn't have to be in person."

"Oh my God. Yes it does."

"No it doesn't. It can't be. I just need some time to get better at my game, that's all."

"What? No. No game. Just be yourself and own who you are. If she really likes you, she'll like the way you look just the way you are and the kind of person you are will only enhance that."

"I think I just need to get better at dating without being seen."

"You know what? Fine. Do what you want, stupid. That's never going to work. Love is a balance of a lot of things. You can't just supply one and hope that the others won't matter."

"Yeah. Whatever."

Troy pulled out his phone. He was still furious with his ex-bride-to-be and planned to ruin her social life completely. He was in the middle of an absolutely scathing Twitter post to follow the Facebook post he had left on her wall when he realized Meldina was reading his the post over his shoulder as he was writing. Her eyes were wider than he had ever seen. Troy blushed, deleted the post, and then buried his phone deep in his pocket.

"Damn. That girl messed up," Meldina said.
Troy's jaw dropped. He had definitely been expecting a reprimand. The support blew his mind.

"Meldina?"

"I mean I wouldn't do that, but I can't blame you even if you were being stupid."

The two walked into the penthouse and were greeted with an exclamation of joy over the marriage. This outburst died very quickly into overwhelming confusion since Troy was with Meldina instead of the unknown girl from the Internet. They spent the better part of a half hour explaining themselves and reassuring the two women that they weren't married, weren't planning on getting married, and had no intention to ever date. The next two weeks were spent lecturing Troy over his poor dating habits. Not that much of what was said made an impact. Dinner didn't make an impact. The only thing he remembered from the meal was Meldina feeding her tofu to the dog under the table. He was too focused on finding someone new to love.

It didn't take long for Troy to find a girl online that he could easily fall in love with (or at least think he was in love with) again. He managed to find her within a year of his failed wedding, and to fall in love just as fast as the first one. When she started asking for pictures of him, he had got creative. He became a master at Photoshop, removing his malformations ("challenges") and sending her photo after photo of him on the beach, at graduation, in Paris, skiing. Photoshop
became his new best friend. He could have any adventure he wanted, without ever leaving home. But mostly he sent selfies. He liked selfies because he didn't have to make up a lie to match.

And just like that, a year full of charm, love, and compliments later, he had a newly obtained fiancée. The two made their plans to elope and went to the courthouse. Troy put on his hoodie and caught an Uber, dodging both moms’ questions and the well-meaning discouragement, and Meldina on his way. But the union was not meant to be. Troy walked into the courthouse, waved, and watched his bride-to-be's face contort in disgust. She stormed out of the building as his heart fell out of his not-yet-healed wound from the previous wedding and landed on the pavement with a resounding thud. Troy caught an Uber back to his apartment building, climbed the stairs, and took what he considered to be a lecture the way a two year-old takes medicine. Love was not working out for him. Marriage was not working out for him. Troy decided to content himself with sitting in the dark, sulking, and leaving a trail of candy wrappers and pizza boxes everywhere he went. He considered posting his opinion of the girl who had hurt him all over the internet and even went as far as to type out the post. Then he remembered his conversation with Meldina. He was totally justified in leaving the post, but if she wouldn't do it to someone who hurt her, he wasn't sure he could justify doing it to another person either. So, he deleted the text and sulked, neither
of which did much to mend a broken heart but both of which led to him putting up a wall in between him and the women in his life.

Only Meldina was stubborn enough to continue to try to break through his stony disposition. His moms had decided to let him mope. He'd get over it eventually. He may have been through two break-ups, but the women knew, if Troy did not, that they were only crushes. Meldina knew that they had only been crushes as well, but she also knew that that Troy needed her. Fixing his problems wasn't her job, and she had absolutely no problem telling him that. It wasn't her job to make him boyfriend material either. What it came down to was simple: he was her best friend and if he was upset then they both had a problem that they were both going to deal with. So Meldina stopped telling him why he was wrong, because he obviously didn't need that, and started spending extra time with him. Troy picked up on some of Meldina's better habits and benefitted greatly. The two went outside for regular walks and to ice skate in the winter. He managed to choke down vegetables in salad form and even to learn to like a few of them. He even stopped spending the majority of every day staring at a screen. Meldina prefered books, but the two began to spend the majority of their time focused on each other. And their friendship benefitted a great deal.

Troy and Meldina were falling very deeply in love.

Troy entered the new relationship cautiously at first. He couldn't be blamed with how painful his other "relationships" had been, even if they were
wholly pathetic. But with Meldina he soon found that there wasn't much need for caution for they had a relationship based on caring, understanding, and friendship. After four beautiful years of dating, Troy proposed and they tied the knot with Mom and Mom-Karen's blessing. Meldina and Troy decided not to have children. Instead, they opened a clinic that was completely non-profit and sponsored any and all medical care for children from underprivileged homes. The best part for them, however, was the start of the volunteer program at the clinic. Many of the children who received treatment came back and donated their time to help those in need. Some of them, after attending college, became doctors at the clinic and began to research breakthrough medical treatments for a variety of ailments. The clinic was Troy and Meldina's real baby, and they couldn't have been more proud of it, basking in every sun-filled moment as it continued to grow as a force of good in the world. Their marriage only grew stronger, and the two grew closer. It was simple; the two lived happily ever after.
The Pig Prince: Analysis

"The Pig Prince" by Giovanni Francesco Straparola is an Italian fairy tale, which means it's comical, a little dirty, and adult-oriented. It begins with a virtuous king and queen trying to get pregnant but being unable to do so. The queen is visited while she sleeps by three fairies, each of whom bestows gifts, including pregnancy. She will have a baby boy, but he will be a pig until he is married three times. The parents are appalled, but of course they cannot give up a child they see themselves in, so they raise the pig as a prince. One day, the prince demands to be married to one of three sisters he has seen. His mother convinces the girl to marry him as a favor for the king and queen. After the wedding, the prince overhears his bride plotting to kill him in his sleep. Before she can, he kicks in her chest while she sleeps, killing her. He then demands a second bride, who meets the same fate as her sister for the same reasons. The prince is then wed to the third sister, Meldina, who believes that one should treasure what she has in front of her instead of demanding more. She welcomes her husband that night. The next day, he realizes that he can remove his pigskin and be a real boy. He swears Meldina to secrecy, but she gives in and tells her mother-in-law after becoming pregnant. The next night, the king, queen, and soldiers wait outside the
bedroom while their son goes to sleep with his wife. They burst in and destroy the pig skin in the fire. The prince and Meldina live happily ever after.

As fun and funny as this tale is, there is almost no scholarship in English discussing it. My research only found one piece of scholarship for Straparola, which luckily contained some information on "The Pig Prince." The lack of scholarship is not surprising in the context of fairy tales as a genre. Many fairy tales in the canon don't have any scholarly articles written about them at all. In many cases, there is no analysis, no documentation of the history, and very little on the people who wrote down these tales. Why is there so little scholarship on fairy tales as a whole and this one in particular? For this specific tale, I am inclined to believe that it is the lack of retellings since Straparola's version led to the lack of scholarship. Without more modern versions consistently being created, "The Pig Prince" fell out of the eye of academics. It lost its relevance, so there was no need to continue to talk about it. For fairy tales as a genre, I think the lack of scholarship is due to the perceived lack of value in the academic community. Despite being an integral part of any culture, they primarily hold entertainment value which is generally undervalued when compared to works that embody social reformation and literary exploration. This dynamic doesn't work. Fairy tales have to read, learned, and retold in order to maintain their relevancy within a culture. Additionally, "The Pig Prince" is a little dirty, making it more adult-oriented. When fairy tales began to be recorded, children's literature emerged as a
genre. Fairy tales were revised for a much younger audience. "The Pig Prince"
most likely would not have been used in these collections because of the amount
of censorship that would have to be used to create the children's version. So,
despite the lack of scholarship for "The Pig Prince," I am going to bring the tale
into the modern world and retell it because that is the nature of fairy tales.

What this one piece of academic evidence provides, however, are the
technical aspects of a Straparola fairy tale. According to Jan Ziolkowski,
Straparola only wrote two types of fairy tale: restoration tales and rise tales.
Restoration fairy tales are distinguished by "a protagonist who initially loses high
status but who [it] is later restored to," and rise tales follow "the formula of
poverty-magic-marriage-money" (Ziolowski 379). "The Pig Prince" actually
contains both narratives, not just the rise tale format that Ziolowski identified. The
rise tale narrative can be applied to Meldina. She enters the tale as a peasant,
maries a pig prince, the prince becomes a man, and they rule happily ever after.
The prince could be said to follow this pattern, however, he is royal. He was royal
before his birth, so even though he receives a lower status because he appears to
be a pig, he actually does fall from his status. So, the prince more closely fits
restoration tale format. For my retelling, the restoration tale format provided a
more stable core for the narrative than the rise tale. It allows my prince, Troy, to
start low and work his way into something better. The other significant point this
article makes is that academics and storytellers commonly try to pinpoint
"absolutes when it comes to fairy tales," but there are no true absolutes (393). I took this statement as permission to make any changes to the tales that I saw fit while maintaining the elements that were important to each tale's identity.

The first, perhaps most obvious, change I made regarded the creation of the pig prince. In Straparola's tale, the conception of the child resulted from the wishes of three fairies. The first fairy wishes for the queen to "become pregnant and bear a son who will be the most handsome child in the world" (Straparola 52). The second fairy wishes "that no one will have the power to offend [the queen], and that…her son will become the most virtuous, charming, and courteous man imaginable" (52). The third fairy to perform magic for the sleeping queen seals the fate of the prince by wishing "that the son she conceives will be born in the skin of a pig with a pig's ways and manners, and he will be obliged to live in this shape until he has been wed three times" (52). While it may be amusing to think that the fairies created a pig prince as a prank, it's more likely that the fairies meant the gifts to teach about the importance of acceptance. As I learned in Dr. Dugas's Fairy Tales course, the Italian culture highly values children and encourages the idea that to learn, one has to make mistakes. By instilling a gift that could be seen as a curse, the fairies force the King and Queen to continue to learn and grow as people and this process calls on the reader to do the same. The fairy tale demonstrates the importance of acceptance through the gifts of the fairies and how one chooses to respond. I chose to remove the ability
to wish from the magical world and give it to the parents. They are the ones to hope and wish for a child, and their determination allows Troy to be born. The magic of the creation stems from the revolutionary new science that allows a child to be conceived outside of the human body. However, to allow science to step in and completely overtake the world of magic would remove the fun from the tale. The couple is thus forced to seek an alternative form of help that does not rely on "traditional" methods.

The creation of the pig prince in the retelling is accomplished by a male figure instead of a female. Straparola's tale does not dictate the gender of the fairies. The fairies are referred to only as a group or individually as 'the fairy': "they caught sight of the sleeping queen, they stopped, and, gazing at her beauty and charm, they discussed how they might protect her" (52). The assumption that the fairies have to be females is no more than that: an assumption. With the lack of a pre-determined fairy godmother, I opted to create a fairy figure that could embody the dilapidated house I created for him to live in, instead. A male figure better fit this setting. Normative gender roles make describing a man as disheveled and old without passing a certain amount of judgment onto the character more plausible. Since females are held to higher standards for their appearance, I couldn't justify having the fairy-like character be a woman. To describe a female character as old and disheveled, with out-of-control hair, would create a figure more closely associated with a hag. A hag was not necessary for
the story, but the eccentric appearance added to the unconventional nature of the birth of the pig boy.

In sharp contrast to "Bluebeard," "The Pig Prince" is colorful and comedic. For instance, upon seeing that the prince is a pig, the king initially wishes to have him "killed and cast into the sea" but doesn't because "he recognized that this son...was of his own blood" (52). The pig fills the castle with filth and mud but his parents "tolerated everything with great patience because he was their only son" (52). There were also three weddings between a pig and a human. Traditionally, weddings end comedies in theatre. However, there is also the contemporary drama of the romantic comedy, or rom-com, which incorporates ridiculous comical antics and the development of a relationship between two individuals, usually marked by some sort of conflict causing their separation in the middle. The marriages between the pig prince and the three girls presents an ideal template to experiment with using the rom-com dynamic. I picked Adam Sandler's late body of work, which shows a softer side of comedy that results in the union of two individuals who are not united at first but form a solid romantic relationship by the end of the movie. The middle of the movie becomes a light-hearted series of trials and errors, where the guy tries to get the girl and predominantly ends up just embarrassing himself; endearing himself more to the girl he's really meant to be with.
To stay within the spirit of the romantic comedy and ensure that Troy remains a likable character, the punishments for the girls after the marriages failed had to be completely reinvented. Straparola's tale says that after the first wife betrayed the prince by plotting his murder and the prince responded by waiting for her to fall asleep then striking "her with his sharp hooves and" driving "then into her her breast so forcefully that he instantly killed her" (53). The only defense he offers for his act is "that he had only dealt with his wife as she had intended to deal with him" (53). The second wife also wished to kill the prince and so is "killed...the same way...the first bride" was (54). This is excused just as deftly as the first. The punishments are harsh, cold, and completely removed from the tale's comical tone, even though the first and second wives can be considered worse than their husband. In constructing Troy, I couldn't bring myself to have him exact punishments to his first two fiancées that were as cruel as the original pig prince's. To fit the Sandler rom-com role, Troy has to be, at his core, a kind-hearted, good man. The punishments were changed to attempts at humiliation, implying shock and hurt that did not include physically harming the girls. Troy gets to be the nice guy throughout the entire tale instead of just when he is getting his way.

The punishments end with the introduction of the third wife, Meldina. She chooses to value the pig prince for who he is, instead of judging him by his appearance and pig-like manners as her older sisters do. She shows her true nature by welcoming the prince "to lie down by her side," refusing to shove him away,
and saying, "'You should learn to appreciate a rare gift and never let it go once
you have it in your hands'" (54). The punishments stop in Straparola's tale at this
point. Meldina has appeared and brought with her the astute understanding the
other two lacked, and she embodies the grace, wisdom, and graciousness that a
true princess is expected to possess. She is the wife of the pig prince and behaves
as such.

Meldina appears much earlier in my retelling, taking on the role of Troy's
childhood friend. Her immediate acceptance and understanding sets her up to be
the ideal wife for him, but, since this is a romantic comedy, she has to be
temporarily overlooked. Meldina then intervenes after the first failed marriage,
and the punishments end. Her relationship with Troy is distinguished by a deep,
personal connection that establishes her embodiment of the characteristics that a
true princess has. Meldina and Troy get to live a fairy tale life through their
romantic comedy and become the kind-hearted humans they were always meant
to be.
The Literary Tales

Literary fairy tales are tales that originated in written form, were always meant to be read, and have a definite author. The creation of the literary tale turned fairy tales into a personal experience, contrasting the public experience oral tales represented. By writing the tales, the audience became restricted. Only those who were educated and could read were able to partake in the literary tradition. The format of the tales changed as well. Authors used the tales to demonstrate their skill level and flaunt their education whereas oral tales were meant largely for entertainment. Literary tales often reference classical works such as the Bible to show the extent of the author’s education. They also portray an interest in the thoughts of the characters, as in Hoffman's tales. The characters also all have names, while their oral counterparts do not. The dialogue in literary tales is less extensive, and the text is more eloquent than spoken word texts. Literary tales possess a polished nature that no oral tale would ever show in its original form.

The literary tales I chose are "The Sand-Man," "Mines of Falun," and "Automata," all of which were written by E.T.A. Hoffman. Hoffman wrote fairy tales, including "The Nutcracker," for his godchildren. In order to create them, he made use of historical events and contemporary technological improvements,
including the introduction of automata and clockwork beings. As a result, although Hoffman's stories are undoubtedly fairy tales, they are also science fiction. I have chosen to maintain the overall science fiction aspect in my retellings, upgrading the technology and bringing in the modern concerns that come with the technological improvements.

Another significant aspect of Hoffman's work is that the stories all slightly overlap each other. Characters’ names reoccur. Similar technology appears. Specific traits reappear in different characters across tales, such as the figure of the mysterious old man. Characters appear in several tales, most famously the Nutcracker in "Automata." I have maintained this practice in my tales as well. My tales all take place in Point-G. Thematically, they follow the impact the use of robots has on the environment.

Hoffman's tales also feature a form of weird magic. It doesn't occur through the use of traditional magical forms like fairies, wishes, enchanted objects, or wizards. Instead, the magic in Hoffman's tales takes on the form of the unexplainable: it causes things to happen and reactions to occur that aren't explicitly linked to magical circumstances. For instance, the Turk in "Automata" is psychic and Elis Froebom in "Mines of Falun" is perfectly preserved fifty years after his death until he is united with his true love. Magic is the explanation because there can be no other explanation. Thus, magic is the ruling force in these tales, one that retains its power despite advances in technology.
Besides the arc provided by the similarities in the tales and their overall science fiction nature that I have chosen to maintain, each of these tales has its own pop culture anchor to help it stand on its own. The first tale, "The Sand-Man," focuses heavily on the difference between humans and robots, so I chose to use the 1973 film *Westworld* as its anchor. My version inverts the narration. Nathanael becomes the object of focus, and Coppola steps forward to narrate his version of the tale. I also chose to push the idea of the differences between humans and robots as far as I could. This decision is further grounded through contemporary innovations, like the ones Hoffman would have used, since androids are beginning to be developed that can take on the ability to act and behave like humans. My version of the "Sand-Man" elaborates in the idea of what happens when an android becomes too human.

"Mines of Falun" is a love-story that in Hoffman's day was widely retold. It is essentially a romance; Elis Froebom has to choose between his two loves and dies in the process. When he is reunited with his true love, his corpse breaks down and the two are able to die peacefully. His work-love in the tale is represented by the queen of the mines and his other love is Ulla. This gives Elis two wives to choose between, creating a love triangle. I chose to link my version to Guillermo del Toro's *Crimson Peak* because it also presents the unconventional love triangle of having two competing wives, one who knows about the other and one who does not, and a darker presence that guides the protagonist through the narrative.
My version of the tale moves the story from the mines to the bottom of the sea. I have chosen to emphasize the two relationships and the effect they have on my Americanized character, Alex Froebom.

"Automata," the third and final tale I chose, is about a group of men sitting around and telling stories about oddities. It doesn't have a real ending, and the longest of the tales the men tell, "The Talking Turk," doesn't have a real ending. I chose to emphasize the frame work of this tale and used Bradbury's "Usher II" and Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" as cultural anchors to add to the foreboding tone and help link "Automata" to my other tales. My version of "Automata" focuses on the narrator and his response as the stories unfold.
FROM THE DESK OF DR. GIUSEPPE COPPOLA

The following is a warning to the scientific community.

In this age, where robots and androids are becoming as common as human beings on this planet, I, Dr. Giuseppe Coppola, am releasing this statement as a public service to the scientific community regarding the creation of consciousness in a completely engineered being.

This feat has been accomplished.

I have created consciousness in an entire community of androids located at Point-G, known to its inhabitants as "The Sand-Man Lot." The name of the location comes from the inhabitants. I own this land and all its inhabitants. I play the roles of both landlord and "doctor." The androids have to be regularly maintained so that they continue to function properly. They are powered down throughout the whole process and therefore have no recollection of any of the repairs that have been made. Because I induce "sleep mode," the inhabitants have started calling me "the Sand-man."

For the most part, the inhabitants are aware of the fact that they are androids.
I have to say "for the most part" because science can only accomplish so much. In the case of my creations, it is possible that science accomplished far more than it was ever meant to. In my attempt to create a sense of consciousness in my androids, in an attempt to truly give them life, I inadvertently created a sense of free will. The androids could do as they pleased. They developed sympathy and empathy, the ability to love, the ability to hate, a wide range of emotions, the ability to trust, and the ability to make analytical decisions on their own that factored in a version of the "human experience." They became computers so utterly perfect that they could make mistakes and become emotionally unstable.

I was God. They were my people.

My intent was never to allow things to get so utterly out of hand. I had wanted to prove that it was possible to create consciousness in an android. I left modules and databases open in the minds of each of my robotic creatures so that they would be able to obtain an understanding of the human experience and become more like us. I wanted their insides to feel like they matched their outsides, metaphorically speaking, of course. But my ambition became too great, and I began to assign them human lives besides humanity as well. It was through this act combined with the unnatural ability of the androids to take on a set of characteristics that should only be available to humans that created the chaos that later ensued.
I implore you to never attempt this experiment again.

The androids went rogue in the most civilized manner a creature ever possibly could.

I had created nuclear families in the community. One such family - a family of three - used their free will in a way I would have never thought possible. The parents decided to raise their son as a real boy. They never told him that he was a robot who needed constant alteration in order to grow up alongside his constantly expanding database. They just told him he was their son. The boy has always been called "Nathanael." I will not name the parents here, as their names are of no concern to me. "Nathanael," however, is the reason I issue this warning. You see, he never once realized he wasn't human or questioned his genetic make-up.

If his parents had said it, it must be so.

Which was perfectly fine for a while. I was able to come and go, visiting the household and repairing the androids as necessary. I was constantly making upgrades as the technology improved and as I invented some improvements of my own. The more improvements I made, the more human-like my androids became. They began to exhibit more lifelike emotions, move more fluidly, and retain more information, allowing their responses to become more varied. The upgrades, while constant, took a considerable amount of time to create and install throughout the community. So, while I was always working on the residents, I wasn't always at
the same house. In most cases, the visits were welcome. The inhabitants generally welcomed these upgrades. I powered them down, completed the procedure, and then restarted each inhabitant and asked it to test the mechanism. Only in one home, that of Nathanael, were my visits ever unwelcome. The parent androids didn't seem to be too bothered. In fact, the father didn't seem to be bothered by my presence at all. The children, however, always distanced themselves from me. Their processing capabilities were faster than those of the adult robots, and I believe they were able to detect the small differences in our appearances, like body hair and my slightly overweight body, and use those to conclude that we were not the same. The problem with that was that the children had been led to believe that they were human, which meant that I could not be human to also. I was too physically different. The children tried to distance themselves from me with the help of their mother.

I confess, at the time, I found the reaction funny. I know now that my amusement was not taken lightly.

I continued to visit the house and make repairs. Nathanael became a special project of mine. I began to wonder if I could possibly upgrade it into a human.

Then one night, during one of my visits, something somehow went wrong. Nathanael didn't power down.
I had no idea at the time that Nathanael had been affected so deeply. I thought I had powered him down during his repair session. I did. Yet somehow it didn't work. Nathanael remained semi-conscious the entire time and retained memories from the process. The memories may be disjointed. They may not be the most definitive account of what happened. But, what is clear is that Nathanael was able to recognize at a young age that he was not normal even though he was unable to recognize why. He came apart, and boys should not come apart. They are not made of pieces. He was aware that I had actively replaced small parts with bigger parts to make him grow, that I had been working on the processor that he had thought to be his brain, and that I had upgraded his vision to make it clearer and almost better than a human's. At the time, I did not know, however, that any of this had been retained. And I did not truly know, although I had some inclination, that Nathanael believed himself to be human. I assumed he knew he was an android with the closest thing to a soul he could ever possibly attain. I believed he knew he was a robot on some level. He did not, and the discovery that he was possibly merely a mechanism sent him into a panic that would never truly die.

My visits then became more frequent. Several of the older robots began to break down to a point where they could no longer be repaired, including Nathanael's father. His father was bedridden. He stopped leaving his study, and began to distance himself from his kids. His wife called for me and immediately
put the kids to bed. The procedure I had to perform was extremely intricate, requiring the majority of the fragile hardware in the head cavity to have to be worked around. The chance that I would succeed was non-existent. Two minutes into trying to remove the first fried wire the interface exploded, catching the face on fire. Backing away, I got a glimpse of Nathanael in the doorway. His mother fainted. I vowed to fix things for Nathanael. I had made him a little more sensitive than the others. Somehow I had to help him move past this horrible experience of seeing his father explode and having to look upon the charred, mechanical remains in the immediate aftermath.

Which led to my next mistake.

I introduced Nathanael to my children, Clara and Lothair. Clara and Nathanael took an instant liking to each other and became the best of friends. They were inseparable. From the time they met until the very end. So inseparable, in fact, that Nathanael eventually proposed, leaving Clara and me in a difficult position. We debated her acceptance of the proposal for months. Meanwhile, Nathanael went to the University at Point G, in hopes of creating a stable future for himself and Clara. Clara was determined to marry Nathanael, no matter what he was. She insisted she didn't care. They communicated constantly. Clara let the engagement consume her life. She was going to marry her best friend.
I, on the other hand, was beginning to struggle with the relationship again. Months had passed before the thought of breaking them apart ever occurred to me.

Nathanael was an android. It having feelings wouldn't have bothered me at all, but it had developed the ability to feel attraction for human beings of the sex opposite of the one it had been programmed with. This was something I had never dreamed of. I was both delighted and appalled. Delighted because my sweet little creation had taken on more of a life of its own than I could ever have dreamed of. Appalled because it never should have happened. It was a moment of utter uncertainty. Here, I had more than I could have ever dreamed of. Yet it all felt incredibly wrong. There was nothing I could do at this point to change Nathanael back into the robot he was meant to be in order to give myself some peace of mind without hurting Clara simultaneously.

For the time, all I could do was sit back and wait and hope that nothing would fall apart.

The records show now, though, that Nathanael had become obsessed with trying to understand just how different he was. The Sand-Man had consumed his thoughts.

Clara, for her part, did everything she could to distract him, to relax him, to remove those thoughts from his mind. But it was no use, you see, because it wasn't a mind she was dealing with at all. It was an operating system with a nearly
infinite storage capacity. Nathanael was never going to forget, and he most likely never would be truly distracted. Clara's response was to try to reassure Nathanael that he had been mistaken. He had been very young at the time of his father's death. Surely, he had misunderstood the visits of the Sand-Man in the case of his father, she tried to say, adding that the Sand-Man was a scientist and the two had probably been working on some sort of experiment that exploded, which had led to the sad demise of his father.

He became as irrational as an android could get. He accused Clara of being a robot. Her practical nature and perpetual optimism infuriated him. He began to recognize a difference between the two of them. Her mind worked differently than his. If he was human, then he could not believe that she was also a human. They were too different. He began to accuse her repeatedly of being a robot and fly into unpredictable rages and depressions, displaying more emotion than I had expected. At this point, I should no longer have been surprised by his human-like responses. Yet, they were shocking and a little frightening.

Clara began to reconsider.

I decided to use the moment of doubt to separate the two and break off this unnatural relationship. I had to distract Nathanael somehow and decided that the best course of action would be to treat it like any other red-blooded American boy. I just had to find an appropriate female substitute, beautiful enough to steal him away. At the time, it was my only option. In the middle of the night, I moved an
extremely old - but extremely young-adult-looking - female android in across the street from Nathanael.

Her name was Olympia. She was one of my very first prototypes. As such, her capabilities were limited to minimal movement only, and she required constant maintenance and supervision. I could not continue my work in Point G and take care of her. I managed to convince a good friend of mine, Professor Spalanzani, to be her guardian. He agreed, eager to see Point G and interact with the androids. He mostly observed, as Olympia's maintenance became almost all-consuming. I gave him every spare part I had in order to help keep her running long enough for her to attract Nathanael. New parts, old parts, used parts. All of them. Including Nathanael's.

More importantly, she was attractive. A much younger me had sculpted this particular android into almost Barbie-like proportions. She was pale with a beautifully painted immobile face. She couldn't speak, but she knew a little sign language and how to write. She emoted almost solely through her eyes which needed to be replaced more than any other part as a result. She had been meant to do light secretarial work, resulting in her being pretty much chair-bound.

As soon as Spalanzani reported that he had witnessed Nathanael taking interest in Olympia through their window almost daily, I decided that it was time to give Nathanael a little nudge to its appropriately assigned mate.
I began to hope for a change. I began to hope that the boy would leave my girl alone in favor of one of his own kind. I was horribly mistaken, but not for lack of logic.

The first problem I knew I had to combat was to the extreme technological differences between Olympia and Nathanael. In short, changes had to be made to Nathanael to make it a compatible mate since Olympia would never survive the process. Cautiously, I approached Nathanael as a salesman and convinced him to take a new set of eyes in the form of glasses. Nathanael was paranoid. It recognized me as the Sand-Man, despite me introducing myself to it as Coppola and creating what I'm assuming was a thoroughly unconvincing accent. I hadn't expected either of those changes to have any effect on how it perceived me. The goal was to gain access to it at home and get Nathanael to take the glasses in order to avoid a repair session. Ideally, I would have preferred to make the changes internally. I could have ripped out the motherboard, removed processing circuits controlling its ability to feel, deleted files, unwired certain units, and plenty of other things. I had a whole list of operations I would have liked to try. However, since it recognized me, no repair session would have been possible. Instead, I had to rely on the glasses to impair the vision units by scrambling the image before it made its way to the sensor that would then deliver it to the processor.

Additionally, I had magnetized the glasses. It was the oldest, most mundane trick I could think of. Magnets impaired the ability of technology to perform and often
deleted files. I had no way of knowing if it would work on him, or if he was upgraded past the point where something as simple as a magnet would affect him. I had run out of options. Technology was failing me.

Nathanael tried the glasses on and immediately noticed the difference in his vision, mistaking it for advancement. Really, it had been reduced in order to help Olympia to appear more lifelike to him. Nathanael moved to the window, and the reaction on his face told me that they were working and that he would accept. I left quietly and waited for Nathanael to finally meet Olympia in person and end his engagement to Clara for her own good. I urged Spalanzani to hurry the process along and throw a party for Olympia to meet Nathanael.

Nathanael entered the party wearing his new glasses. I watched through the window. I couldn't help it. This was the only hope I had to get Clara away from Nathanael. Slowly but surely, my efforts began to pay off. Nathanael went out of his way to ask Olympia to dance and the two overtook the dance floor, spinning and whirling around the room. Olympia was only capable of traditional movements, so the waltz was their only option. The two stood out in the room. They didn't fit in with humans very well, mostly because of Olympia, but she seemed to bring out the most robotic in him. Nathanael began to fall for her. His face gave him away. He became upset every time someone else asked her to dance and did his very best to ensure that he would be holding her attention. I watched as the humans in the room began to laugh at his obvious infatuation with
the robot. Unbeknownst to me, in Olympia, Nathanael had found the qualities that he had always associated with humanity. She was rigid and stiff in her movements due to old parts. She exuded warmth from the over-exertion of her mechanisms from dancing. Her speech lacked the calm, practical nature that Clara's exuded, due to a slow, outdated processor.

The two kissed. Nathanael embraced the dead bride instead of his live one and the piece of clockwork outdid the beating heart. Immediately he dropped to his knee to propose, symbolically ending his relationship with Clara. I turned and left. It was all I had needed to see to be sure he would stay away from my daughter.

The following day, however, led to a further breakdown in Nathanael's psyche. I knew that part of it was still obsessing over the Sand-Man and the idea of other-ness that the Sand-Man and Clara represented to it without ever once realizing it was he who was different. Nathanael was constantly reanalyzing the differences. It did not matter who he was with or what he was doing. There were ways to get him to push those thoughts back. I had to assume that my sad little magnet didn't work. At this point, the best distraction was Olympia.

She, however, was in desperate need of repair. She had never been designed to spend so much time on her feet moving around nor to spend so much time powered up. Being created as an assistant, I had never dreamed that she would be put to so much use in such a small period of time. Spalanzani called in
the morning. She was whirring and couldn't move. What was worse, though, was that he was completely out of spare parts. I struggled to find parts that I thought would be compatible and fit within her casing so as to not disfigure Nathanael's new fiancé. There wasn't much left of anything. Many of the inhabitants of Point G were in sad disrepair and were losing sight, their memories, their mobility, and, more slowly, their loved ones. It was a sad mess of a town now. I could have saved it if I had spent even a moment thinking about it. Instead, while Nathanael obsessed over me, I obsessed over him. Looking back, it is probably for the best that I left the city to fall to its ruin. If the other androids were even somewhat capable of the sort of emotionally charged rampage Nathanael would prove he could enact, then it was for the best that they all ceased motion.

Meanwhile, I scrounged together a pitiful collection of remaining spare parts that I had left and took them back to Spalanzani's home to make some of the necessary repairs. All I had managed to find that would fit her were some of Nathanael's parts from his childhood, including a pair of eyes that greatly outdid Olympia's current pair.

I powered her down and began to work. First, I installed the eyes and had her test them to make sure they worked. Then I powered her back down to continue with the repair session.

During this second power down, Spalanzani became agitated. The details of the conversation are not of much importance. To be honest, I'm not sure that I
could transcribe the conversation even if it were. What I do remember is that it resulted in a massive argument over whether I should continue to create artificial life or if the whole project should be permanently powered down because of how problematic Nathanael was proving to be. He picked up a hammer at some point and began to smash Olympia. I picked up Olympia and the two of us began to on her, each trying to pry her from the other's hands.

It was at this point that Nathanael walked in. The look on his face said was a mess of emotions and constantly shifted to fit each knew one that crossed through his processing system.

Then Olympia's eyes fell out.

Nathanael picked them up. I may be flattering myself, but I believe it recognized them as its own. It turned and left.

I dropped Olympia and followed him. To my surprise, Clara was standing inside Spalanzani's house as well. I have never pried into the reason for this. I have chosen instead to assume that it was through her affection for Nathanael that she had felt the need to check on him. Somehow she had instinctively known something was wrong. It was caught in the middle of his real fiancé and his broken-down robot fiancé. Nathanael stopped in between the two of us for a moment and let out an ear-splitting shriek, grasping his head.

"YOU DAMNED AUTOMATONS!"
Then it ran up the stairs to the second floor of the house. Clara followed. I had no choice but to join them. The uppermost floor of the house was almost completely bare. Spalanzani never used it. The only defining feature was the massive window leading out onto a balcony overlooking the driveway. It filled the room with light in a way that no lightbulb ever could. Besides the stairs, it was the only way out.

"The eyes. It was the eyes," Nathanael continued to mutter to himself.
"Those damn eyes."

It continued out to the balcony and walked himself right up to the edge. Clara followed him closely in her meager attempt to care for him. Nathanael whipped around and grabbed her by the arm, pulling her towards the railing.

I have no conscious memory of what happened next.

The next thing I remember is Clara crying, and Nathanael on the ground in a heap of broken bits and pieces. It has been said by some that I threw him over the balcony.

Spalanzani promptly had us all leave.

I salvaged Nathanael's motherboard before I left so that I could better understand his train of thought. I'm not convinced that it knew what it was experiencing just that he was experiencing it. What I was able to download from it shows how erratic his thought processes were. His mind was too powerful, and
his automated emotions were too real. It drove him into a simulated madness that could have ended far worse.

Nathanael was never reassembled. I never even considered doing it.

Clara and I no longer speak, but it is my understanding that she did marry a real man and that the two are very happy together. For this I am thankful, and her happiness is worth all of the loss that I have endured.

Systematically, Point G was powered down one household at a time. I abandoned the city and the inhabitants. The robotic era has been pushed too far. We were never meant to recreate human life in a non-human entity and computers were never meant to feel. It takes something genuinely unique in order to maintain the emotionally stability most humans display. They weren't cut out for a life like that. Some of the androids fought back, swearing that they would never fully power-down and that they would manage to exact revenge for the ruin of their lives someday.

I have no doubts that some may succeed.

I believe that some are already very near the point of success. My lab has been broken into regularly. One day soon they will find me in here.

So, I leave this note as a testimony to the fall of Point G and the literal fall of Nathanael. I leave this note as a warning to the scientific community against further advancement in the field of robotics. I leave this note as an apology as well. No one is meant to wield the amount of power that I had at that time.
Do not forget Giuseppe Coppola and Point G.

More importantly: Never restart the project.
The Sand-Man: Analysis

E. T. A. Hoffman's "The Sand-Man" follows Nathanael as he descends into madness. Nathanael was scarred during his childhood and the memories come back to haunt him when he's in college. As a child, he hears the story of the Sand-Man and comes to associate this eye-stealing demon with his father's business partner, Coppelius, whom he suspects is responsible for the suspicious death of his father. He forgets as he grows older, but his encounter with Coppola, who resembles Coppelius, causes Nathanael to begin to obsess once again over the man he considered the Sand-Man. It destroys his life, almost ruining his relationship with his girlfriend, Clara, and his good friend, Lothair. The two friends work to restore Nathanael's normal behavior before he goes back to school. He finds his house has been burned down and moves across the street from a woman named Olympia, leading to a romantic relationship with the female who turns out to be an automaton. He is also visited by Coppola, who sells him a pair of glasses. Clara and Lothair visit Nathanael to care for him after he suffers a mental breakdown from discovering Olympia's true nature. The three go out for a day and make their way to the top of a tower. Seeing Coppola through the glasses, Nathanael has a breakdown, attacks Clara and then commits suicide. Clara moves on and is able to have a happy, healthy relationship.
Hoffman's tale employs an unusual mode of storytelling for fairy tales. The tale is epistolary. It begins with a series of three letters: two from Nathanael and one from Clara. Then it turns into a third person account with an omniscient narrator who focuses on Nathanael. "The Sand-Man" thus becomes Nathanael's story, leading the reader to believe that the Sand-Man truly is the demonic figure that Nathanael believes him to be. As scholar Ruth Ginsburg notes, however, the "discrepancy between origin and language creates the conditions for the mystification of male knowledge, where in the beginning there is always only somebody else's word, origins displaced from text to text, front he narrator's story to his characters' letters" (Ginsburg 33). The narration of the story, therefore, is not as reliable as one would like it to be. Nathanael believes the Sand-Man to be evil, which leads to his belief that Coppelius and Coppola are evil despite Clara's reassuring him that "these foreign influences...have no power...that it is only belief in their hostile power which can make them dangerous to you" (Hoffman 193). This statement further confirms that the demonic nature of the Sand-Man is apparent only to Nathanael. Changing the narrator to Coppola and confirming the combination of the three evil male figures changes the tale. The change in the narration of the tale in the retelling also helps to make a clear divide between good and evil where Hoffman's distinction is somewhat murky. According to Christa Spreizer, "Hoffman was fascinated by the porous boundaries between madness and reality, life, and death during a time when the
psychosomatic body was threatened by social...political" and "personal experience" (Spreizer 237). Hoffman worked in grey areas in order to experiment with ideas that were "very much of the cultural movement" (White 364). Determining a definite evil falls into this category. Nathanael creates an unreliable narrator, while asserting that Coppola/Coppelius/Sand-Man is evil, compelling the reader to decide for herself if she can trust the information enough to believe him. Meanwhile, Nathanael's character is not portrayed in a positive light, despite having some control over the narrator. Nathanael is portrayed as self-centered, a little vain, and untrusting. Nathanael repeatedly takes his frustrations out on Clara, calling her "'a damned lifeless automaton'" causing her to be "cut to the heart" (Hoffman, 200). He becomes engaged to an actual automaton, Olympia, while still engaged to Clara, developing "no thoughts except for Olympia" after seeing her through his window (204). And he attacks Clara on the top of the tower at the end of the tale, grabbing "hold upon Clara and" trying "to hurl her over," finally managing to get her over the railing of the gallery (214). Nathanael is not a traditionally good protagonist, just like Coppola/Copellius/Sand-Man is not a traditionally evil antagonist. They both occupy the grey area. By having Coppola narrate in my retelling, the divide is made a little less blurry while still allowing me to experiment with the idea that Coppola may not be a traditionally evil character. He maintains a certain level of fault in the retelling, but the reader is
left to determine if Coppola and Nathanael's characters are good or evil and how much of each of them is at fault for the way the story ends.

Another blurry area that Hoffman explores, influenced by a significant cultural movement from his time, is the creation of the automaton. According to Eric White's work, the automata are pieces of clockwork machinery that "reproduce the outward physical appearance of living beings" and "imitate their typical behavior" (White 364). The appearance of the automaton is a staple in Hoffman's stories, although some appearances are more subtle than others. White argues that Nathanael "is...strictly [a] robot entity devoid of authentic rationality and free will" (364). Early in the tale, Nathanael sneaks out of his room to spy on his father and Coppelius at work. His father's facial features resemble "an ugly, repulsive Satanic mask," showing that he is something other than human (Hoffman 188). To Nathanael, the faces of the men appear eyeless, a trait that Coppelius tries to resolve by removing the young boy's eyes. After Coppelius is begged by the boy’s father to spare Nathanael, Nathanael finds himself able to "keep his eyes and whine and pile his way through the world" and is forced into an examination of "the mechanism" in which Coppelius "twisted [his] hands and...feet, pulling them...this way, and...that" (188). Coppelius demonstrates an interest in specific parts of the body and how they work. This, combined with Hoffman's fascination with automatons, implies that Nathanael and his father may not be human. Later in the tale, Nathanael develops an attraction for Olympia, an
automaton, over Clara. His attraction stems from the belief that "only [she] alone" an automaton understands him, causing "his heart" to tremble "with rapture when he reflected upon the wondrous harmony which daily revealed itself between his...and his Olympia's character" (209). He and Olympia appear to be more spiritually alike then Nathanael and Clara. This intimate connection with the automaton, combined with the lack of one with Clara, further cements the idea that Hoffman created an automaton in Nathanael.

Olympia is, therefore, a better match for Nathanael than Clara is. James Pearson elaborates on this idea by referencing the psychoanalytic idea of doubling, saying that Olympia is portrayed "as Nathanael's double" (Pearson 19). Pearson asserts that this is due to the father dynamic displayed by Coppelius and Nathanael's real father and Coppola and Spalanzani (19). Both figures are paired with good/true fathers and bad/false fathers. Olympia's true father, however, is not a biological parent; he is her creator. Olympia was called by "lawyers...a cunning piece of knavery" and was actually "a wooden puppet instead of a living person" that was introduced to "intelligent tea circles" (Hoffman 211). Olympia is more than just a basic automaton. Her introduction into society makes her a social experiment. Spalanzani is forced "to leave the place in order to escape a criminal charge of having fraudulently imposed an automaton upon human society" as a result (212). If Nathanael is truly Olympia's double, then his presence in society should have the same implication. He doesn't belong there. His placement is for
observational purposes, so that his creator can watch the way he interacts with those around him. This further supports the theory that Nathanael is not a human, but an automaton. I decided to use this idea, combined with Hoffman’s focus on culturally relevant movements, to create my Nathanael. Nathanael, in my retelling, embraces the implications from Hoffman's text by being an android. Androids have maintained their status in mainstream culture throughout time because they are always being improved. Current models of the humanoid creations have latex skin, can talk, and can simulate the ability to think. Next steps would be the simulation of emotions and psychological anomalies. This allows me to focus on science fiction and be influenced by works such as the 1973 *Westworld* in order to build the better android.

There is an emphasis in Hoffman’s text that Nathanael and Olympia are made up of parts. Nathanael's feet and hands are twisted in the early part of the text, beginning the designation of Nathanael as an android. The text also places an emphasis on eyes. The Sand-Man is said to steal eyes from children. His father and Coppola appear eyeless. The glasses are first "eyes-a" before they are "spettacles" (Hoffman 202). And later it is the "pallid waxed face" of Olympia with "no eyes, merely black holes in their stead" that causes Nathanael to finally have a complete breakdown (210). All of the scholarly research I have found explores the concept of eyes in a psychoanalytic manner. Specifically, throughout the articles, the eyes are related to the Oedipus complex. Trying to relate this to
Oedipus seems far-fetched. The story revolves around Nathanael's identity, so it would make more sense that the eyes play into his identity. Traditionally, eyes are said to be the windows to the soul, so if someone were to be missing his eyes then this individual would also be soulless. In the tale, they pinpoint moments in Nathanael's life that created a sense of doubt and made him question reality. For instance, the first reference to eyes is when he catches his father working with Coppelius. The men appear to be eyeless. Coppelius then goes after Nathanael for "a beautiful pair of children's eyes" which the father then confirms is the part he wants (188). The eyes as glasses later affect Nathanael's vision while he looks at Olympia the first time, causing him to stare as if "by a wizard's spell" allowing him to fully appreciate how "divinely beautiful" she was (203). The glasses reappear at the end right before Nathanael commits suicide. The eyes as eyes, however, appear for a final time right before Nathanael's descent into madness. When he sees Olympia without her eyes, it strikes him that she's not human. This incident could have triggered the memory of Coppelius trying to remove Nathanael's own eyes. The memory would have created doubt in his humanity, causing the descent into madness and confirming the presence of the female automaton. The eyes are a key symbol in this tale. I tried to use the eyes in the tale to facilitate the change in Nathanael. The narrative becomes a story of self-discovery, told through the eyes of the man who creates the android.
Mines of Falun

Alex Froebom had returned home with several coworkers from a long sales trip. He had returned back to what he hoped would be his normal life. He had pictured it every day of the trip. He would return home with gifts. His mother would be elated and the two of them would have a home-cooked meal and a night in. The next day he would party with the boys doing whatever "boy-things" they had planned to celebrate the assignment being over. Maybe he would have a fling. Then he would go back to his little grey desk in his little grey office and wait for his next sales assignment with the other little grey men in their little grey suits and software brochures.

But the happy homecoming was not meant to be. His mother had passed away the day after his return. A new family had moved into her apartment quickly.
All of his mother's belongings had been sold and the money from her estate had been put into the trust. The majority of his belongings had to be put in storage. He was heartbroken. He couldn't even enjoy the coming home party. He sat in a lonely corner of the bar, doing his best to not make eye contact with anyone. His friends sent girl after girl over to him, hoping eventually he would succumb to the fun. Instead, he very quietly told each one about the loss of his mother. Then, very quietly, each girl stood up and left the bar crying. His friends stopped and he sat alone in silence, drinking his third beer that he hadn't wanted.

Alex had spent the majority of the evening staring into his mug. When he finally glanced up, he noticed that he had been joined by another man. The man had greyish skin, a scraggly beard, long, matted hair tangled up with bits of shells, and decomposing clothing. He smelled like he'd been soaking in salt-water and black lumps were protruding off of his skin.

"Can I help you?" Alex asked him, hoping he sounded icy enough that the man would leave.

"You are not meant for the air," the man said quietly.

"I'm sorry?"

"You are not meant to be flying from country to country spending all of your time in a plane, in the air, when you could be in the ocean."
"In the ocean? Well, that is an amazing fantasy. Look, buddy, I don't mean to be rude but humans do not live in the ocean. Humans can't work in the ocean. And I hate fishing. So." He took another drought of his beer.

"Not if you go to Falun. Life is for the living in the water in Falun, sir."

"Where the hell is Falun?"

"It's extended out of Point G. It is the only place where one can actively discover the true wonders of the ocean. The way the floor transforms into coral and jewels and metallic life. The fish. The fish we don't have names for that behave more human and more creature-like than any other fish ever has. The never-ending darkness interspersed with the unnatural lighting of its inhabitants in brilliant neon colors."

Alex stared at him blankly. Not a single word the man had just said had made any sense. He knew that androids had finally made contact with the ocean floor. He just wasn't completely convinced that is was as marvelous as the old man was describing. Then again, it may just be the beer talking, but if a man could look so much like he belonged on the ocean floor maybe there was something to his story.

"You don't believe me," the man stated. "True, I will never be able to do the many wonders justice with my words, but they're there. They're there for you, Alex Froebom. Now, get you some sleep and then get yourself to Falun. Her majesty is waiting."
Alex glanced back at his mug for a second. His head was starting to swim. When he looked up, the man was gone.

Alex had to agree with the man on one thing. He desperately needed some sleep. He booked a room at the hotel the bar was in and immediately fell into a deep sleep.

His sleep was not undisturbed. He dreamed a richly vivid dream that left him more upset and exhausted than anything else. He was flying in a plane when the plane suddenly turned clear as crystal. He looked down and was able to see straight to the bottom of the sea floor. It lit up through the darkness in brilliant neon colors, flickering back and forth like they were bouncing off of something metallic. The crystal underneath him dissolved and he plummeted down into the black. He became engulfed in a bubble that continued to pull him down instead of helping him float. Alex panicked briefly, trying to swim up in his bubble. As he desperately tried to go up, the man looked down at him from the surface. "Go to Falun, Alex Froebom," he directed. Alex allowed himself to be pulled down and was shocked by what he found. The fish far outdid any he had ever seen. He could see some of their organs, some glowed, some weren't shaped like fish, a few had prominent exoskeletons, some had fangs and others appeared to be made purely out of metal. The ocean floor was alive. It wasn't beautiful; it was extraordinary. Suddenly, two faceless androids walked up behind him and began to roll the bubble forward along the sea floor. Alex stumbled along inside it. The ocean
began to get brighter and the androids soon stopped and floated away. Alex's jaw dropped. In front of him was a huge mermaid, half-fish half-woman. She was pale white with a blue tail. She had green, seaweed-like hair. She had gills. She was covered in coral and barnacles and what appeared to be very small, dead fish bodies. She turned and looked at him. Alex turned away. There was something about her that intrigued him, but she was also a fish which was a little disgusting. Everything went black. Then Alex heard the man again, "You have now looked upon the queen and will serve her. You are no longer one of the land."

Alex woke in a cold sweat.

Then he got in his car and drove for three days. Alex drove through Point G, not taking any notice of the androids imitating human life around him. A robotic town seemed like a frivolous idea, and he didn't have any time to waste on such nonsense. He really didn't have time to waste on any of the nonsense from the dream or the bar, yet he had still taken time off for this road trip. He wasn't thinking. He was just driving while the golden warmth filled his car and a warm sea-breeze floated in through the windows

Alex stopped as soon as he saw the exploration center. It shaped like a giant bubble that was sunk halfway into the sea. The waves washed up around it, partially blocking out the office inside. There was a large tube in the middle that gently descended down into the blue ocean, allowing workers to go down to the ocean floor. It was impressive but he was still resistant to the idea of working at
the bottom of the ocean with a group of androids as his only companions. He wasn't even sure what he would do with an android if he had to work with one. Could they get wet? He couldn't swim, and he didn't plan on working anywhere that would require him to learn. He wasn't going to join. It wasn't for him.

Alex leaned back in his seat and watched as a group of workers walked into the mouth of the tube. There were four men and eight androids. The men were all in wetsuits and carrying a large amount of scuba diving equipment on their backs. The androids were white with propellers stemming out of their backs. The men each seemed to be doing a check to make sure the androids were functioning properly, including dumping water over their smooth, white heads. They were waterproof.

A girl in business attire joined the group. Alex found himself immediately smitten. If she worked there, he was interested.

Alex got out of his car and began to walk towards the bubble. The girl greeted him at the door, a surprise he had not been expecting but completely welcomed.

"Hi. I'm Alex," he stuttered out.

"Hi. I'm Ella Pehrson. Would you like to come in?"

Alex Froebom's feelings escalated from smitten to deeply in love.

"Yes. And a job if there are any available."

Ella laughed briefly and then realized he was serious.
"We do have an opening, but this is highly irregular. Have you even submitted an application?"

"No."

"Perhaps you should come in, and we should discuss this decision then."

Alex and Ella sat down over a small, homemade lunch that Ella had prepared for all of the employees and the two talked. They talked about everything they could think of. Things that were pertinent to the job like Alex's swimming ability and job history. Things that weren't pertinent to the job like Alex's mother passing away and why he would drive when he could have flown (a question he did not have a decent answer to). The result of the long, honest conversation was that Alex was hired to work at Falun.

"I have to warn you though, Alex," Ella added, "the bubble is not always the safest place, and, as much as we would like to believe that what know the contents of the ocean floor, there is still much that is left to be discovered. We have no way to guarantee your safety within the bubble, and to leave the bubble would guarantee your death."

"I understand."

Alex joined the team after lunch. They were looking for something new and were attempting to create a map of the ocean floor that they owned. He found that, while the work was at times challenging, it suited him, and he became a valuable asset to the team. He quickly advanced through the hierarchy. Soon, he
was the one leading the team for Ella and her father, making the snap decisions on
the ocean floor, and assisting with the plans to make the tube somewhat mobile by
adding a rubber compound to the thick plexiglass, so that the workers were not
confined to one ten by ten foot spot and could move about with ease. Meanwhile,
Alex and Ella continued to bond. He spent every spare moment he had with her,
learning as much as he could about the kind of person she was. Each day he fell
more and more in love. Ella also enjoyed spending her free time with Alex
Froebom and had begun to fall in love with him as well. Their love for one
another, though never openly admitted, was extremely obvious in the work place,
even though it never once presented an obstacle to the work they were doing.
Alex believed that they would make the discovery that Ella hoped for and
supported her efforts wholeheartedly. His unwavering support despite months of
no significant findings even inspired the team to work harder and more diligently.
The Pehrsons, through Alex, began to make conditions in the tube more
manageable and, as a result, somewhat safer. For once, the entire team, although
they had been happy before, finally felt that they could hope for their discovery.

Yes, things were looking up for Alex Froebom.

One day, after several months of hard work later, Alex was working down
in the tube, directing the androids with the other team members. They still hadn't
found anything. Yet, one android had managed to snag a glimpse of what had
appeared to be a new breed of fish. The group was hopeful that they would be
able to find it, although many speculated that since the fish appeared to be so metallic and be covered in lights that perhaps they had only gotten a glimpse of an aquatic drone. Still, they all persevered as one unit, each facing a different direction in the tube in order to cover as much ground as possible. Alex decided to work through lunch and was left in the tube alone after a lengthy debate about his personal safety.

Alone in the tube, Alex stopped working for a moment. He wasn't quite sure that this venture was going to be successful. He rubbed his eyes. When he reopened them he was stunned by what he saw in front of him.

The man from the bar was floating directly in front of him on the other side of the enclosure.

Alex's jaw dropped.

"Alex Froebom. You have made a grave mistake."

"Well. I'm sorry."

"You cannot look upon the Queen of the Sea and choose to come to her for the love of another. You have caused a great disruption in the ruling of the tides."

"Oh dear. Have you, by any chance, seen the fish I'm looking for?"

Alex had a one-track mind.

"You will find your fish if you move your base that way." The man pointed.

"Oh, excellent. Thank you."
"Alex Froebom, understand this. You cannot choose to come to the sea and its Queen for anything but love of the Queen. Now that you are here, you must choose your love for her and abandon the notion of love for another. If you wish to survive, that is. The Queen does not take kindly to sharing what is hers. You are hers, Alex Froebom, and you made a mistake the day you chose to come here for love of another. That love is not meant to be and will never last. You will not marry your land-dweller, Alex Froebom. You have already been joined. Heed this warning and work for the sake of love of this place and its treasures."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

But he had vanished.

Alex assumed that he was hallucinating and began to gather his equipment to go back to the surface and call it a day, when something glimmering caught his eye. Their fish was in front of him. Not close enough that he could really see it, but he was positive he had found the fish. Alex quickly snapped a picture of it with his phone, even more stunned and convinced he was oxygen deprived than before, and raced back to the surface as fast as he could.

The other men were heading back down the tube from lunch as he began to surface. Each commented on his deathly appearance and urged him to go to see the facility's nurse. Alex just wanted to talk to Ella.

He found her still at the table, waiting for him with his lunch. Alex immediately blubbered his tale out to her, excluding the detail about his being in
love, and showing her the picture on his phone in hopes that she would believe him.

"It sounds like you've met Torbern," she replied calmly.

"Who is Torbern?"

"Torbern used to be a sailor. A sort of traveling salesman on a cargo ship, who traded predominantly with Asian countries, I believe, is how the legend goes. One day, they were sailing and he began to tell his fellow sailors that the sea was calling to him and he had to return to his Queen. A few days later, a massive storm hit. The ship was being beaten about by the sea. All hands were supposed to be on deck helping to control the ship and make sure it didn't capsize. Torbern walked right off the stern of the ship, sinking straight to the bottom without putting up even the slightest bit of a fight. Since then, he has appeared all along the coastline, helping fisherman find the best spots to catch whatever they are looking for, or, sometimes, something better or just more impressive. There have been plenty of sightings here as well. We had the damnedest time building this place. He kept appearing to our construction crew and each one fled as soon as they saw him. We've lost a few good task force members that way as well. He appears when there is something to be discovered, supposedly."

"So he's a ghost?"

"No."

"A ghost that likes water?"
"No. Honestly, Alex, he's just a legend. But, if it will make you feel any better, we can act on your hunch and move the tube base for the time being."

"I have a picture."

"I know. We'll move the base."

As reconstruction began at Falun, Alex could not forget Torbern or the full extent of the message that he had delivered. He was particularly upset by the definite message that he would never marry on land because it wasn't fated. He began to think of a way to outsmart Torbern and finally managed to raise enough courage to tell Ella that he loved her. He wanted to elope. The idea was as insane and irrational to him as dropping his entire life and moving to Falun, which was why he was so sure that it would work.

Alex went to see Ella and her father at the end of the work day, intending to proclaim his love. When he reached them, however, he was greeted by an unwanted surprise. Ella's father had decided that she should become engaged to Eric, an engineer from Point-G, in order to create the power couple necessary to run Falun and ensure its success. Ella did not seem to object.

Distraught, Alex fled the bubble and hurried back into the sea. He sunk down into the black depths without struggling. Without Ella, he had no desire to remain in Falun. He prayed inside his head to be shown the way by Torbern back to his Queen. Suddenly, he found himself able to breathe and in the midst of a beautiful, aquatic garden. Coral towered above him like trees with fish darting in
and out of the reef, giving the illusion of jewels sparkling. In fact, fish glowed and glittered in every color every way he turned, lighting the entire ocean floor. Small, flower-like buds created a path. He used the creatures to guide him along the sea floor, further into the light. In the center was the queen. She was massive and more brilliant, beautiful, and grotesque than any dream could have ever portrayed. Alex was overcome with a sudden warmth and threw himself at her. She embraced him.

Alex woke up back inside the artificial world within the bubble. Ella, her father, and coworkers surrounded him. An AED and an Oxygen tank lay nearby. They had resuscitated him. He could turn down emergency medical services when they arrived.

"You, son," Mr. Pehrson began, "are an idiot."

Alex blinked at him. That was all he could manage at the moment.

"The engagement was never real. I just wanted to, you know, give you a little shove and force you to admit that you were in love with her. Obviously, it didn't go well. Damn, kid; she's not worth dying over!"

"DAD!" Ella yelled.

"Now, you listen to me. She's yours. Do NOT mess up on this scale again."

Alex and Ella became engaged a few months later. Prior to their engagement, Alex had returned to his old self. The task force of Falun seemed to
be getting closer to finding the metal fish they had spotted. After the engagement, however, he began to act strange. Alex spent his entire work day longing to be on land with Ella, and, once he was on land, he spent his entire time with Ella wishing he could return to the sea. He was distanced from both of the important aspects of his life, torn between two worlds. He began to have vivid dreams and was often too tired to be productive when he was at work. The change was obvious. Ella's father chalked it up to wedding day jitters. He claimed that all Alex needed was a proper bachelor's party and he'd be fine. But Alex didn't want one, and Ella disagreed. The two planned a quick wedding to take place with her family and their few friends within the next couple of days.

The night before the wedding, Alex's sleep was anything but restful. Torbern came to visit him and woke him up. Alex immediately panicked because there was a man in his room when he was asleep, and then he freaked out even more when he realized who was actually paying him a visit.

"Alex Froebom."

"Oh dear God. Go away. I'm done with you. I'm done with the Queen. I'm done with the sea. I can't even swim. Just leave."

"Alex Froebom, you are not going to marry a land-dweller and you shall not disrespect the Queen this way. You are her Prince, and it is time to return to her kingdom. Come back to the sea."

"No."
"To the sea, Alex Froebom."

"I'm getting married tomorrow!"

"You're married already, Prince Froebom, to the Queen and the Sea."

"Like hell!"

"Now get back to where you are destined to be."

Torbern disappeared.

"I am not married. I'm getting married tomorrow."

The next morning, Alex woke up feeling twice as torn as normal. He knew he wasn't married, yet somehow he was.

He had to set things right. It was Ella he was supposed to be with.

Alex hurried about through the morning preparations, frantically searching for Ella. He found her in her wedding gown having her hair done half an hour before they were set to start.

"Ella."

"Alex! You're not supposed to see the bride in her dress before the ceremony. It's bad luck."

"I'm sorry. Listen. I haven't gotten you a gift yet and -"

"I don't need a gift. Besides, we're getting married in a half hour."

"- and I'm going to bring you back your fish that we've been trying to find for months now."

"Alex. That isn't necessary. There's no time. We'll find it later. Together."
"I'll be in the tube. It won't take long."

Alex ran to the tube in his tuxedo as fast as he could, determined to end it all and return with a prize for his bride.

The time for the wedding passed. The pastor left. Guests went home. Ella sat at the edge of the land, where shore met bubble and stared into the tube. The task force had left to look for Alex when the wedding was supposed to start and had returned a few hours later empty handed. So far, the Coast Guard had found nothing. So, she sat and waited.

Falun closed as Ella could not continue her life's work. Her broken heart made it too painful to go back.

Yet, Ella returned to the bubble every year on what should have been their anniversary. She became known as the Point-G Hag to the locals who went to the area to explore the abandoned research center that was supposedly haunted by a dead groom who had fled the altar on his wedding day, preferring to drown instead.

She returned every year for fifty years.

Then, on what should have been their fiftieth anniversary, something shocking happened. A few of the locals crawled back out of the tube and through the bubble to the shore, dragging a body behind them. They'd found him at the bottom of the tube that had begun to fill with water. The body was of a young man
who, despite being bloated and blue, had retained every bit of youth that he had
had on the day he had fled from his own wedding.

Ella walked slowly forward to see if it could possibly be Alex. As soon as
she recognized him, she threw herself down on his body sobbing and pulled him
into a tight hug. Her heart beat slowed until it stopped and she joined Alex in
death. Alex's body, having been returned to his land-dwelling bride, shattered like
a piece of dead coral and turned to sand.

The two were buried together on the beach, finally able to be together in
death even though they were unable to do so in life.
Mines of Falun: Analysis

"Mines of Falun" is a story about the love life of Elis Froebom. Elis returns from a business trip to find that his mother is dead, her home and belongings have been sold, and he has nowhere to go. Elis is unable to enjoy the coming home party at the pub that night and separates himself from his friends. Outside, he is confronted by a mysterious old man who tries to convince him to abandon his trade and travel to Falun to work in the mines. That night, Elis has a vivid dream in which he sees the wonders of the mine and the Queen. This convinces Elis to quit his job, travel across the country, and eventually arrive at Pehrson Dahlsjoe's mine. Elis decides that mining is not going to agree with him and begins to leave when he sees Pehrson's daughter, Ulla, whose appearance makes him decide to stay so he can be close to her. Elis works hard, helping to improve the mine and earning promotions. He quickly becomes an important member of the team and grows closer to Ulla. Pehrson Dahlsjoe then announces his daughter's engagement to a man from the village. Elis is so distraught that he runs down into the mine where he is met by the old man from before and is taken to meet the queen. Elis is revived above ground and promised Ulla as his wife. But Elis undergoes a change that leaves him disconnected from his love. The detachment becomes more noticeable as the wedding approaches. The night
before the wedding, Elis is once again visited by the old man who scolds him for choosing to be in the mine for the wrong reason and warns him of the consequences for disloyalty to the queen. The next morning Elis rushes to the mine to get a jewel for Ulla. He doesn't return. Ulla visits his grave on what should have been their anniversary for the next fifty years. On the fiftieth year, his petrified body is pulled from the mine. After being reunited with the corpse, Ulla dies and Elis disintegrates. The two are buried together.

Keeping with the fairy tale tradition, this particular tale is a retelling. As John Neubauer writes, the tale "is based on a real incident" that occurred in 1720 when "the corpse of a miner buried in an underground explosion was" found (Neubauer 477). The body "was curiously petrified in a vitriolic solution" and only disintegrated after fifty years (477). The story was told in the news in the early 1700s and began to appear in fiction in the early 1800s. The first fictional version was told from the scientific viewpoint of Schubert who "shared the Romantic belief that the original unity with nature would eventually be re-established on a higher plane by science" (478). Hoffman's "Mines of Falun," however, does not establish a unity between science and nature. Indeed, the two appear to be at odds. The humans are part of the human world. Nature is part of the mine world. And the mixing of the two produces disastrous results i.e. Elis's death. Instead of establishing unity, nature prevails in the most magical way it
can. It turns Elis's body to stone and preserves it until he can be reunited to his fiancée.

The tale being so completely intertwined with history and science allows for the otherworldliness of our own world to be explored. Mines no longer facilitate that exploration. Disney's mine in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* has quite possibly become one of the most iconic images of the treasures a mine can possess. The dwarves hold our attention to what miners look like in the realm of fairy tales. In other words, there is nothing fantastical left to be explored in a mine. The bottom of the ocean, in contrast, has barely been explored. In 2013, Animal Planet released the documentary, *Mermaids: The Body Found*, as a hoax. The movie claimed that scientists had discovered evidence that mermaids existed. The next day, at the request of the U.S. government, the movie had to be withdrawn and a formal statement about its legitimacy had to be released to the public. Although the documentary was undoubtedly fake, it brought to everyone's attention one very real fact; we do not really know what the ocean holds because so little of the ocean floor has been explored compared to the earth's surface. The floor of the ocean is almost completely uncharted territory. Our ignorance about the ocean floor allows for more fantastical environments to be created, such as Tamatoa's shiny lair in *Moana* and the many depictions of the lost city of Atlantis. This ignorance also makes the ocean floor the ideal place to set a retelling of "Mines of Falun." Also, in keeping with Hoffman's tradition of focusing on
advancements in society, my version includes steps being taken to make exploring the floor possible that are beginning to be developed. That is, my version features devices which are being invented that can work at the bottom of the sea without needing a human inside to control them. Moving the setting to the sea and adding the android assistants allowed me to bring the three hundred year-old tale into the twenty-first century.

Much of this tale does not involve a sense of choice. Elis is compelled to do something and then responds. Torbern, the old man, and the dream sequences influence Elis's decisions, leading to his union with the mine Queen. According to Neubauer, the "Romantic...mine may symbolize a quest for a true self" and involves "two basic quests" that lead to "a perfect withdrawal into the self" and "a complete surrender of the ego to nature" (476). The journey is meant to be one of self-discovery. Elis must determine which life he is meant to lead: one on land, one underground as Torbern suggests, or the one at sea that his job dictates. Instead, "he becomes a hapless prey of the unconscious forces that appeared in his dream" of the wonders of the mine because they tie him both to "the underground queen" and Ulla (486). Elis acts to obtain the beauty he sees. He chooses to work in the mines only after seeing Ulla and experiencing "a lightning flash...go through his heart, kindling all the heavenly bliss, the love-longings, the passionate are ours lying hidden and imprisoned there" (Hoffman 296). All of this comes from the sight of "a beautiful young lady....in the full glory of the freshest bloom
of youth" (295). Likewise, the display of the jewels and queen in the mine
naturally attracts him to Falun. Elis is a character who reacts to his surroundings,
not one who acts of his own accord. He is easily manipulated by the longing for
the beautiful things he sees. This leads to his ultimate demise. Elis dies because he
spurns the queen, but also because he desires a "cherry-colored sparkling
almandine" that is "more splendid than the most glorious blood-red
carbuncle...which shoots from the queen's heart" (305). He is unable to choose
one thing he wants over another because they are both so alluring.

The lure also causes Elis to fall because he unintentionally begins two
relationships. The first is with Ulla, the girl he loves and intends to marry. The
second is with the queen to whom he is drawn against his will. This second union
is intimately formed when the queen "put out her arms, drew him to her, and
pressed him to her breast" (302). Elis enters this union sooner than he realizes.
The two are joined as soon as Elis sees her in his dream at the beginning of the
tale. Torbern warns that he must now "take care" and "be faithful to the queen"
because he has unwittingly committed himself to her (292). Torbern appears again
to condemn the relationship of Elis and Ulla. Elis cannot marry her because he
doesn't realize that he's already married. Guillermo del Toro's movie, Crimson
Peak, presents a similar scenario in which a man has two wives and they cannot
all coexist peacably. Although the original marriage is not revealed until the end
of the film, the recognition of it makes the motives of the protagonist clearer. The
second wife must act to save her life and if at all possible preserve her marriage. The husband must choose and, when he is unable to do so, dies. This specificity of there being a marriage between Elis and the queen is lacking in Hoffman's tale. In my retelling, Alex becomes aware that a marriage has been formed with the queen by going to kingdom in the ocean where his predecessor was unable to. The motive to go down into the ocean becomes a more pure one than obtaining a beautiful gem stone in Hoffman's original. Alex is determined to resolve any conflict there may be that would prevent his union with Ella. Although the romance still ends in tragedy, the wedding day motivation is clarified, and Alex gains the ability to make a decision of his own instead of just responding to his surroundings. Alex becomes a more human character whereas Elis and his tale felt completely fictional. The retelling of the tale embodies the idea of change and evolution as embodied in Alex.
Automata

I proceeded into my good friend Lothair's residence. A few of us were gathering there to try to pass the time and bring some joy out of the utter gloom that surrounded our little society. As usual, I was late. But that is the life of a medical student during any time in which there is a plague. Our sad town was recently quarantined off from the rest of society, and neighboring communities had been evacuated. We were located on what remained of Point G and Falun. Both technological institutions had been left to rot where they stood, without proper care or disposal of any of their equipment, toxins, solutions, or creations. Instead, the creations all sank into the Earth and the water supply, slowly poisoning all of the inhabitants. People were dying slow, painful deaths every minute of every day. Recently, the poison mutated into a communicable virus. It began to kill its victims quickly and silently like some sort of Red Death. There was no cure. We were all going to die. I was clearly in the wrong profession. And, to make matters worse, I had no way to help anyone who came into the hospital even with my extensive training. Nothing would have changed if I hadn't been there. And now everyone with any amount of training was required to be on hand six days a week to assist the infected in dying. I truly despised it. But today was my day off, so at least I had that.
While I had hoped that the festivities wouldn't begin until I had arrived, I really wouldn't have blamed the boys if they had. After all, one really can't expect people to wait on them all day. I found the house unlocked and let myself in. It was quiet inside. Too quiet. My heartbeat quickened as I began to wonder what could have happened to the boys. It stopped when I saw them all sitting at the dining room table perfectly still.

"W'the hell are you all doing?"

"Dammit, man. You are going to scare the ghosts away," Lothair scolded.

They were using a damn Ouija board.

"You can't be serious. Those things aren't real. You all are moving it. That's how they work."

"Look, dude," Theodore responded. "If a man can't be superstitious and interested in otherworldly beings when he's constantly surrounded by death, then when can he be?"

"You do have a point."

"A decent one, too, I should think."

"You know, what I find funny about all of this is that you're both right," Ottmar chimed in. "This isn't in any way practical. We are probably doing it entirely on our own. At the same time, now would be the best time to contact the dead as if he were still alive. I mean, we are going to join them soon. And, like it
or not, some of the responses we were getting from the dearly departed were things that I didn't necessarily want to hear. It did work, Cyprian."

"Well, it's charming that you think that. However, I -"

"Guys. Please. I invited you here for a specific reason," Lothair interrupted. "I believe I promised entertainment of the highest sort. Each of you wrote a short story and had me look them over for you a while ago. There was nothing particularly revolutionary about the tales themselves. However, what I have done with them is somewhat amazing. Each story is set up to be performed in its own room in the house by a series of robots, androids, and other works of mechanized fiction."

"What are 'works of mechanized fiction'?" I asked.

"You'll have to see for yourself."

"And a follow-up question: you do realize that the lubrication and oil and chemicals in the androids are the reason that this entire community is dying off, right? This place is polluted; the ground, the air, the food, the water - all of it. And you're going to expose us to more pollutants for a bit of fun?"

"We're already dying, aren't we?"

He had me there. We were all already dying, just more slowly than everyone else. Very, very slowly. I hadn't noticed when I entered, probably because he was seated, but Lothair appeared to be doubled over in pain now that he was standing. Theodore and Ottmar were both struggling to stand up, Ottmar
more than Theodore. I appeared to be the only person in the room not completely
caught in the clutches of death.

"Shall we?" Lothair asked. He ushered us into the first room. The room
was entirely shrouded in purple. A family of five androids stood in front of the
room, with a little mechanical dog. Each of us took a seat in an overstuffed purple
armchair. There were four chairs, a small fact that struck a chord in me. Others
had been invited to this gathering, including our dear friend, Vincent, who I had
watched breathe his last in the hospital mere hours ago.

"Four chairs? What? Are you now psychic or something? How did you
know there'd only be four of us?" I asked, laughing a little. It wasn't funny. I was
just freaked.

"The Ouija board told me," Lothair smirked. "Cyprian, I believe this room
holds your tale. Oddly enough, for one so rationally minded, Cyprian chose to
write about death, madness, and the actuality of ghosts."

"Oh, please. It was just for laughs. I basically lifted it from some old piece
of folklore I found because, you know, you're supposed to retell stories you like.
It's just a story."

"Well. Your story shows the aftermath of what happens when one messes
with ghosts and why one doesn't always need to see what's there in order to
believe what's going on."
Lothair sat down, the lights turned themselves off, and the faceless, white androids lurched to life.

A small girl android raced across the room. My heart stopped. I knew what was going to happen. I wrote it. A mist fully overcame her and she fainted. The mist somehow turned into a larger android, its chest cavity ripped open so we could see what was underneath. She was the White Lady. I had created her for a bit of a cheap scare, but now, in android form while androids were causing our deaths, she was truly terrifying. The family acted in silence out the scenes where the clock struck nine and the ghost visited the girl tormenting her over and over and over. It was somehow worse seeing the torture. Then, the girl's older sister fell out of her chair and collapsed. She was dead. The older woman dropped to her knees and began to pray in faith. She was spared. The mother android calmly stood up, walked slowly to the window, and threw herself out. The father got up and left the room of his own accord. Left in front of us were the little girl and her nanny, both fine and poised. The White Lady had vanished.

"Oh, honestly, that's not even close to what I wrote. You utterly murdered every word of it."

"Well," Lothair snorted. "It was short so I made it concise. But we all need to be moving now. Our host for the next show has left. I believe Ottmar wrote the next piece. It's only a fragment, really. But it demonstrates perfectly how loss and madness can ultimately destroy a person."
Theodore stood up and began to follow. Then, realizing, Ottmar wasn't with him, turned around. Ottmar was still in his seat.

"Ottmar?"

"Theo, you should leave him. He's gone," I said flatly.

"Shouldn't you take his pulse?"

"I don't need to. I know how the death hits. He was doing pretty poorly in the dining room. Worse than either one of you, to be honest. He's gone. We should leave and seal him in."

Theodore left Ottmar and helped me seal the room, slamming the door shut and shoving pillows underneath it to block the small opening.

"Are you two ready now?" Lothair asked impatiently.

Theodore was dumbfounded by the coldness of our friend. I shoved him along to the next room, muttering quietly that he couldn't help and that Lothair's behavior probably had something to do with the way the poison was affecting him and not to take it personally.

The next room I entered was blue. There were no armchairs. Instead, there were just three blue X's on the floor. Each of us stood on an X. I noticed that there were only three X's on the floor.

"There are only three X's," I murmured.

"Sadly, Ottmar has passed before he could see his room."

Theodore shuddered beside me. I glanced at him and offered a weak smile.
"His work is an example of how utter simplicity can sometimes create the most effective horror," Lothair stated.

The android from the first room was joined by five others. The six of them lined up on the other side of the room. They picked up rifles and began shooting at the back wall.

Theodore dropped next to me. He'd obviously had a heart attack. The shock had been too much for him since he was carrying the disease. He was gone, too.

The father android ran straight towards the androids on the other side and collapsed amidst the bullets.

"Oh my God."

Lothair glanced at Theodore. He gasped for air suddenly and coughed up a little blood.

"Next room." He pointed down the hall.

The final room we entered was black. There were two large day beds in the center and androids up on a stage. Lothair gestured, and I picked a bed to lay on. He handed me a manuscript.

"You'll have to narrate Theodore's piece. It doesn't quite work without some sort of direction."

"How did you know?"

"Know what?"
"That we'd be down to two right now?"

"The Ouija board."

"Oh, stop!"

"There's nothing to stop. I put the rooms in the wrong order, but Theodore, Ottmar, and I were destined to die tonight."

"If you say so."

"Theodore wrote what he believed to be a fragment but is actually almost a whole tale. Please read it while they perform. Once they're done you can go. The ground is so polluted the house is sinking anyway."

"You're not making any sense," I whispered.

"Read."

I began:

This is the story of the talking Turk.

[A small android on a stool was pushed to the center of the stage.]

The Talking Turk was thought to be the best automaton of its time. While not overly impressive in stature, its smooth, small body caught the attention of anyone that walked past. It looked more like a robot than an android, an aesthetic decision that warranted some thought. The lack of design made it unique in a world of humanoid robots. The Turk was also special because it had the uncanny ability to tell the future using intimate details only the person asking the question would know. It could respond verbally or in written form, depending on
the sort of answer that was being given. It very nearly matched the appropriate emotion to the answer. It could change languages at will. Overall, the little, lifeless-looking robot had a personality and a life of its own. It drew millions to it. It helped that the robot was also a good psychic.

[On the other bed, I could see Lothair smirking. On stage two androids entered, one on either side of the robot.]

   The Turk was brought to a college town. Most of the students rightly did not believe in the supernatural. Wrongly, they believed that forces that could not be easily understood and replicated by science must not exist. But many fell in love with the psychic ability of the Turk anyway.

["I hate to stop. But robots are computers. It's not psychic. It's just processing all of the information on a person it can find between google and social media platforms like Facebook at a high speed," I interjected. ]

["Cyprian. Just read."]

   Two college students who were not believers were good friends - Lewis and Ferdinand.

[The androids waved as their names were said.]

   Lewis hated the whole android movement. He preferred to interact with humans and to know he was interacting with humans. Ferdinand was curious. He convinced Lewis to join him in visiting the oracle. The day they went to see him, there was already a long line of people waiting. But they allowed
Lewis and Ferdinand to make their way to the front without any wait. Ferdinand stepped forward and whispered his question to the Turk very quietly. He argued and pleaded for a response.

[The android handed me a slip of paper that the robot had printed.]

"Turn your locket around so that I may see the picture. So, this is the one you love? Only heartbreak is to follow. You will never be joined together, and she will never be yours."

Ferdinand left, utterly distraught. Lewis did his best to comfort him but it had almost no effect. Ferdinand was upset because the robot they knew was a fraud appeared to have some sort of real psychic ability. He decided to explain to Lothair what had happened. Ferdinand, a few years before, had been joining his university on a spring break trip to Greece. Being spring break, whether they were with the university or not, the group of guys decided to go drinking and have as much of a party as they could manage. It was in this drunken state one night that Ferdinand had heard the sweetest singing he'd ever heard in his life. He looked towards the hotel across the courtyard and saw a girl on her balcony singing. He instantly recognized her, despite his drunken haze, as his grade school crush and found himself falling in love all over again. In that moment, he swore he would be hers forever.

He hadn't seen her since that night. But he had thought about her every minute of every day ever since. He had even taken drawing lessons for
years so that he could sketch a miniature portrait he always wore in a locket. The news that he would lose her forever had shaken Ferdinand deeply. The next time he saw her was going to be the last.

Lewis believed his friend and began to lash out against the Turk. His most frequent insult was that the Turk couldn't even do as much as a common Nutcracker could. It was a waste of technology. In one wild rampage, Lewis accidentally knocked the Turk off of its pedestal.

[The android gave the robot a shove. It fell to the floor and smashed. I jumped. There was still more to the story left, but I was ready to stop reading. Lothair didn't move at all. The house shook along with me, though. Its unstable foundation caused by years of toxins leaking into the ground retaliated against the jolt. I wondered if the house would make it through the tale.]

Lewis and Ferdinand offered to pay for the Turk's repairs. Instead, the operator told them to take it to the home of its creator, Professor 'X.' He was the only one who would be able to fix the Turk.

When the two walked into his office space they were seriously underwhelmed. The Turk was the most advanced robot he had ever managed to create. The others were all either completely broken down or just not modern enough to continue operating. Many held instruments. Lewis could only assume the instruments were for a band, and the band members could only play the instruments. Professor 'X' offered them a small show put on by his little orchestra.
The performance was mediocre at best. Lewis insisted upon setting down the Turk and leaving. The Professor now had the machine and could take care of it. The pair went home feeling a little disheartened.

Later that night, Lewis awoke to the buzzing of a message on his phone from Ferdinand. Ferdinand hadn't been able to sleep, so he had gone for a walk. During his walk, he managed to find his dream girl. He ran to meet her, but the closer he got, the more he realized he needed to stop. She was in a wedding dress and long, lacy veil. He had found her in time to see her be married. Lewis's heart broke as he read the sentence. More had happened though. Ferdinand then saw Professor 'X' meet the girl and begin to follow her, assisting her as she moved constantly. It had caught Ferdinand's attention. Suddenly, the girl stopped moving.

I chose to leave off there. The story was a piece of trash. She was going to end up being a robot. I didn't need to read the rest, and I was sick of watching the androids move slowly and silently around their small stage, trying to reenact the story in time with my reading. It was creepy. Sitting in a black, cold room with no external light wasn't helping me to feel much better.

I stood up and faced Lothair.

"Alright, look. I'm done with whatever games you're playing. Ottmar died in the first room. Theodore died in the second. I know you want me to die here,
but it's not going to happen. I am going to walk out before they're done and someone dies."

The house shook underneath me. I felt it lurch downwards slightly.

"Do you have anything you'd like to say now?"

Lothair didn't move or say a word.

I moved closer.

"Well?"

He was dead.

It felt a little insane accusing him of murder. After all, the murders would have been far cleverer if we had each died in our own rooms. But the amount of illness, disease, and death that filled my life daily had finally gotten the better of me. It got me to see the worst in someone. I wish I could say that I was ashamed. I wish I could say that I'm ashamed now. But, honestly, I feel nothing.

I walked out of the house back into the light of day and moved swiftly across the street. I turned to face the house one last time. Three of my friends lay inside dead. Their deaths had been caused by the very nature of the business of this town and what it had done to the environment humans had adopted.

I sighed. I was tired. But I didn't feel anything.

As I looked at the house thinking, it began to sink. The ground in the spot could no longer hold such an impressive amount of weight. The house sank down into the mud and disappeared dragging Lothair, Ottmar, and Theodore with it.
I left to return to the hospital to continue to work.

A little, wooden toy figure walked to the edge of the hole the house had created. He stood at attention, waiting. He ran purely on his will to run. Similarly, the androids making their way back out of the hole were running because he willed them to.

Three androids stood at the edge, waiting to be instructed. The little wooden soldier pointed stiffly in the direction of Cyprian then tapped the sword at his side. The androids took off running. They easily overtook the man and ripped him apart limb by limb. Then they collapsed. The weight from the house falling on them was too much for so simple a device to withstand.

The wooden toy remained in Point-G. It had everything it could ever need.
Automata: Analysis

Hoffman's "Automata" is a story about four men sitting around and telling stories. The first is a ghost story. A young girl is attacked by a ghost. The ghost then continues to haunt her every day at the same time, causing violent outrages. The family is unable to diagnose the problem and no treatment seems to help. They begin to suspect that the occurrence was as fake as it seemed. Finally, the ghost appears to the entire family. The girl is left unharmed. The nanny who prays is fine. The sister dies immediately. The mother commits suicide. The father joins the army. The second story, which is much shorter, describes the end of the father, who runs straight into enemy fire and is killed. The third story is only a fragment. It has no ending, foreshadowing the full tale's lack of a true ending. The third story is about Lewis and Ferdinand who go to visit the Talking Turk, an automaton capable of predicting the future. Ferdinand is deeply hurt by the prediction he receives, so his friend goes out of his way to try to prove that there is no way that the Turk could know the future. The two find themselves unimpressed with the wide array of automata they encounter and begin to suspect a hoax. Suddenly, Ferdinand vanishes. The fate that the Turk predicted came true and he fled. The men in the room are left with an endless story and the
suspicion that they actually do know how the story ended, i.e., that magic does exist.

The narrative of "Automata" is strange. The first reason is that the tale is really just about a bunch of men sitting around telling stories. The second is that there is no definite ending. The tale just stops as the men change topics:

"Enough...We are not to hear any more about the Talking Turk, and the story was really all told, after all" (Hoffman 103). The ending implies that the tale is really about the Talking Turk, but this presents a problem. If the tale is really about the Turk, why does Hoffman supply the framing device? The presence of the framing device calls the attention to the men telling the stories. Neither present a full story and neither story nor the framing device is completely satisfying, which makes it difficult to determine what the entire story is actually about. In my retelling, I decided that the framing device was the part of the story that I wanted to emphasize, not the story of the Talking Turk. The three inner tales do not offer much for someone to retell. Much, however, can be said about the four individuals who have only scarcely been introduced by Hoffman. Their lack of personality and the lack of overarching narrative form a nearly blank canvas. The retelling places a larger emphasis on the men in the room instead of the stories they are telling. It becomes character-oriented. The stories fall back a little and frame pulls focus.
The frame tells the story of a group of men trying to entertain themselves. Although there is nothing particularly special about this concept, "Automata", like "Mines of Falun," is thought to be based off of a real event. Martin T. Willis believes that "the telekinetic experiment of the narrator's friends represents Hoffman's fictionalization of the infamous séances of Johann Wilhelmina Ritter...in Munich...and commonly discussed throughout Germany" (Willis 120). The frame offers the possibility of supernatural forces invading the otherwise realistic, modern setting. The introduction of the belief in the supernatural allows the men to discuss ghosts and the psychic abilities of robots without any irony. Hoffman here demonstrates an "appreciation to the great romantic scientists" and the belief that "a solitary cosmic force" may "dominate...natural forces" (121). Hoffman's narrator provides a more skeptical point of view. Upon seeing the experiment with the gold coin, he offers a rational explanation to contradict the belief of the others: "But what if it is not your will...so much as the draught of air when I opened the door which set the ring in motion?" (Hoffman 71). Hoffman, through his narrator, opens up a conversation about the effects of supernatural forces within his tale. The tale suggests by the enthusiasm that the stories within elicit that the characters, by the incomplete end of the tale, accept that there are forces beyond their understanding. The tale asks, in this way, if the reader believes in magic, the essence and defining feature of fairy tales. It also provides a more open interpretation of what should be included in a retelling to those who
choose to participate in the fairy tale tradition. Like Hoffman, I have chosen to believe in magic over science and nature in my tale.

Hoffman also takes the opportunity to set the tale in a historically accurate setting. Willis claims that Hoffman's tale resonates with "Bamberg...a town peculiarly resonant for the late Romantic movement" that influenced the dialogue about supernatural forces (120). The placement of the tale, therefore, is important to the interpretation of the tale. By setting the tale in a dying Point-G, I was able to join the conversation of science and magic and take a stance. The tale takes place inside a house at "a little evening gathering" is also important (71). It gives the opening to the tale darker meanings, implying that the tale itself is not as straightforward as most fairy tales. Darkness creates feelings of uncertainty and foreboding that are cloaked by the playful banter of the men. To recreate that sense of darkness and foreboding, I called upon Poe's "Masque of the Red Death" and "The Fall of the House of Usher" as well as Bradbury's "Usher II," tales with plots that also revolve around groups of individuals being inside of houses. The house in my version closely resembles the ones from Poe's short stories. The rooms are meant to entertain the guests, and each room is meant for a specific guest. It's a party for those invited. The entertainment, however, is reserved for the hosts. The elaborate set up of the rooms and the robots allows the host to sit back and watch as the guests react. The host in Bradbury's tale, specifically, wants the guests to be horrified and then killed in the most fantastic ways he can pull from
literature. My retelling, similarly, is set up in a way that the host creates the rooms and the androids more to entertain himself than to entertain his guests. The reactions of the guests provide a second show for the host. The rooms also enhance the storytelling experience for all invited.

The men in my retelling do not survive the night. Instead, they are killed off by a plague-like virus while having the stories told to and enacted for them by a group of androids. They die while watching the stories play out before them, one in each room. The deaths are reminiscent of those caused by the Red Death in Poe's tale. The guests in both believe they won't die at the party, assuming that their status will protect them. They don't realize how close death is or that it will be contained in the rooms filled with the fantastical androids that are there to entertain them. Bradbury's tale, "Usher II," retells some of Poe's classic horror tales for a new purpose. The difference between Bradbury and Poe, however, is that Bradbury looks toward technological advancements to create the deaths within the tale while Poe looks toward the common fears of his time. Bradbury uses robots to deliver the death in his tale; Poe uses the plague. I have used both: a plague induced by chemicals leaking out of the androids. This decision takes a classic form of mass destruction and brings it into the future. The death sequence also contributes to the Hoffman ideal of Romantic science. Humans are overtaken by their creations. What is left is magic and science, with science appearing to come to an end and humans undoing themselves.
Magic prevails in my retelling of "Automata," as Hoffman's body of work would imply it must. The first and second tales the men tell give a certain amount of credibility to ghost stories within the group: "would not this vision of the imagination striking three people dead in a moment, like a shock of electricity, be the most terrible supernatural event imaginable?" (Hoffman 77). Similarly, the third tale explores and proves the existence of supernatural forces through the Talking Turk. The Turk's psychic ability is proven to be true when Ferdinand finds his love on her wedding day. The men "take a delight" in the way the story excites "people's imagination" (102). The third story also makes a reference to Hoffman's most famous tale "The Nutcracker." Lewis scoffs at the ability of the Turk proclaiming, "Now that I have seen the sage Turk, I say agin, 'Give me My Nutcracker''' (89). Lewis never receives the nutcracker in the story, however, he makes an appearance in my retelling. The nutcracker is traditionally a purely magical character. He's just made of wood, but he can move and talk because he is powered by the magic of a child's imagination. The nutcracker is a character that only exists because of magic. Lewis also says in this moment that the life given to the nutcracker by the imagination of a child exceeds anything that could be manufactured into technology. As said before, the humans are gone. Science is decaying and dying out. All that is left is magic. The appearance of a figure resembling the nutcracker at the end of the tale allows magic to prevail in a world
where we increasingly value science over magic and imagination. The tale of "Automata," in this way, gains a direct meaning.
Works Cited

*Blended.* Directed by Frank Coraci, 2014.


*Cinderella.* Directed by Clyde Geronimi and Wilfred Jackson, Disney, 1950.


*Just Go With It*. Directed by Dennis Dugan, 2011.


Moana. Directed by Ron Clements and Don Hall, Disney, 2016.


Peter Pan. Directed by Clyde Geronimi and Wilfred Jackson, Disney, 1953.


Sleeping Beauty. Directed by Clyde Geronimi, Disney, 1959.


Snow White and the Seven Dwarves. Directed by William Cotrell and David Hand, Disney, 1937.


*Tangled*. Directed by Nathan Greno and Byron Howard, Disney, 2010.


White, Eric. "Insects and Automata in Hoffman, Balzac, Carter, and del Toro."


1 Scholars have widely agreed upon the origin of the fairy tale. Specifically, they agree that it was used primarily by women for entertainment purposes. Scholars also widely believe that these women used to try to retell the same stories as one another, but add to or take away from each tale to make it “better” than the previous version they had heard. This practice was especially common for artists. Artists did not seek to be original, but rather to take something good that they admired and work to be better than the person who had created the original. It is thought that the practice for telling fairy tales is similar. If the tale was liked, it was changed and retold. Knowing the origin of fairy tales, is also important because these conditions are what led to the establishment of the fairy tale tradition which is the basis of this thesis.