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Subject: Prometheus Writes

Hi readers. Below is a short story that I wrote, prompted by a picture provided by prisonexpress.org, for their monthly photo theme (the one due 12/1/2022). The picture is of a young, dusty rural woman holding a gleeful, plump baby, looking back at a cramped, beat-up trailer home. The mythical nature of this story is, no doubt, due to me recently reading the works of George MacDonald, a brilliant, prolific writer, surprisingly not better known.

Enjoy.

And look up and like on your socials artagainsttheodds.com, the site for the prisoner art exhibition that will be at four Wisconsin locations and includes 11 of my drawings, some of which were first published here on BtB!

Pinky and the Brain

by Nate A. Lindell

26 Nov. 2022

For Dorothea, there was little to be cheerful about. Her life in the desperately flat land of Kansas was as serenely bland as the mood expressed in the painting, "American Gothic."

Her father, Theodore, worked for the largest corporation that owned most of the farmland in the state, earning a salary that was barely sufficient to pay for their tiny tornado-bait mobile home. They didn't need anything big, as, after her mother abandoned them (Theodore's Conservative Baptist beliefs did not allow him to remarry), it was only they who shared the abode.

Dorothea couldn't imagine another way of living, knew of no other way of living. (Her father's beliefs also meant that they lacked a TV or a radio.) She was desperate, her humanity profoundly repressed, yet didn't even know it, nor did she know how to express it.

It came out, though, one night when she crept out of their tin can, with a boy. She went to see a movie, a movie that'd been hyped so much that everyone at the parochial school she attended had been talking about it. The boy, Ron, invited her to see the movie with him, a SECRET DATE AT a MOVIE, two delicious sins wrapped in one!

"The boy did what boys do," her father said, when Dorothea told him that she was pregnant.

She was 16 years of age at the time.

Abortion was never even a thought.

Nine months later, John was born. She called him "Pinky," as he was so pink and always smiling, giggling, sparkling, as if he was a manifestation of the opposite of her inner self.

Pinky sometimes giggled so hard that he'd blink away. But, he always came back, always with something pretty, something nice for his mother: flowers, small cute creatures, things that Dorothea had never seen before, although there were many things that Dorothea had never seen before.

Pinky was the one bright star in the dark sky of her life. Not only her life, but that of her father, and that bright star had the opposite effect on Theodore than the effect Pinky had on Dorothea.

"He's of the Devil," Theodore often said, malice in both his eyes and voice. As soon as he saw the flowers or caught one of small, cute creatures that Pinky brought back for his mother, Theodore would ...dispose of them.

Dorothea felt a chill in her bones and blood when her father said such things. She did not want to think about what he might do to Pinky, if she wasn't around, so she kept Pinky as close to her as possible.

When Pinky had his first birthday, he brought back a strange creature, something that Dorothea found it hard to see as "beautiful." She called it "The Brain."

The Brain looked like a brain, was even "juicy," like Dorothea supposed brains were, except The Brain had tentacles, and the slime that it secreted (like a snail, only more copiously secreted) quickly evaporated, leaving the scent of licorice behind.

The Brain and Pinky were inseparable. They crawled everywhere together, blinking away to wherever Pinky formerly disappeared to by himself, then reappearing with the beautiful, weird gifts that Pinky still brought to his mother.

The Brain had a peculiarity of his/her (Dorothea had no idea of it's gender) own. The Brain could make what people were thinking appear, like a 3-D drive-in movie display of people's minds. At least that's what it seemed to Dorothea that The Brain was doing.

When The Brain manifested Dorothea's thoughts, of course Dorothea knew that they were her thoughts, because she was thinking them! Seeing thoughts while she was thinking them was peculiar, made her giggle --at her age!-- as hard as Pinky did before he disappeared, which made Pinky giggle, and then Pinky and The Brain would disappear.

The Brain was too much for her father, "Certainly a demonic being," Theodore would often grumble, as he adjusted his John Deere cap and stormed away. Her father was like oil, while her son and his moist companion were like water: they repelled each other.

Around two months after The Brain appeared, Dorothea understood why Pinky and The Brain assiduously avoided her father. Pinky was (after a long day of bumbling around their trailer, giggling and blinking away and back, chasing and being chased by The Brain) fast asleep, effectively trapping The Brain in the trailer, when her father trudged in, covered in wheat dust. Her father's look told a story that The Brain displayed, like a drive-in movie.

That night Dorothea never closed her eyes.

"Some things can't be unseen," they say. Your father murdering you and your baby is one of them.

As the sun rose, Dorothea, at age 17, clasped her baby and, with The Brain sliding along at her side, fled her tiny world. She took one look behind her, at the trailer in which she'd existed in for 17 years, as Pinky began to giggle uncontrollably, tickling her heart, tickling away tears that she was too afraid, too despondent to cry, as her flesh began to tingle, and, strangely, what she was looking at fizzled away, and she found herself in a forest that was filled with flora and fauna the likes of which she'd never seen before.

Then she recognized a flower, one that Pinky often brought to her.