

**Waukesha Reads – The Big Read  
Flash Fiction Contest  
High School Division Winner  
Kat Wojnar**

**Vanity**  
(Losing My Mind)

To whom it may concern, I'm not a vain person nor are these the words of a deranged lunatic. This shall be my final diary entry. Alas, as I am not the writer of this tale but rather the speaker of this haunting memory, consider these my last words.

I am not a beautiful man, my features were mortifying since birth and I could scare even the most ghoulish of creatures back to the darkest depths of hell with one look. My push to the brink of madness, as some might say, started as if by accident. Whilst walking home one lowly night, a woman merely bumped into me on a dark, wet street and tumbled to the cobblestone below. As I lent out a hand to help her to her feet, she made note of my chilling features with a sense of dread filled horror that could be seen glistening in her eyes, down to her very soul. For God's almighty sake, I may not be a pleasant creature to gaze upon, but the mortified look she threw upon me was far from necessary. Yet she remained there, soaking wet, on the cold cobblestone ground, staring at me with her screaming eyes and terror stricken face. I soon became sick of the look and I chose to walk on. As I did so, a bone shattering shriek echoed off the cold city. The pent up terror that had been swelling in her bosom had finally been ripped free, and let spilled out into the night. This was not the first time this had happened, but it was indeed the last straw. I immediately wrenched myself around and hurtled myself towards her, slashing the knife pulled from my coat pocket round like an animal till it had hit it's mark cross her ivory neck many a times. Her skin was a beautiful soft ivory colour

with a splash of makeup here and there, she was a beautiful creature. My face had never been that perfect; now that she was dead, why should she be allowed to keep hers? Her beautifully coloured cheeks stood out plump against the rest of her features, yet I could not part with the rest of her soft face. I cautiously guided my blade around the outline of her face as to preserve the natural beauty. I would make it my own as the base of my new mask.

Think me vain, I beg you not as you continue to hear my tale. The next night whilst wearing my new beautiful feminine features, a grizzled man smelling heavily of gin, approached and cornered me into a darkly-lit alley way. With a disgusting lustfulness, he forced me against the slimy wall in the shadows. Alas, as his face drew near my own, the light illuminated my features, and a horrid yelp escaped from his lips. His yelp, cut short, as I took my knife once again across the threshold of his grizzled jugular. I quickly began my work of carving out the beautiful features of his face. Slightly bloodied and blanched, I moved from the shadows of the alley.

An older woman saw me alone, almost blindly stumbling about and ran to my aid thinking that I be a young woman whom had escaped attack. To my dismay, as I looked into her caring eyes, a scream was once again forced to be silent by my blade. Her beauteous features too, like the others, were cut from her to make my mask.

Night after night I continued my lusting for beautiful flesh and each night what I had harvested was sewn onto my face and my mask, making me even more beautiful than before! Yet, with all my new beauty people still looked at me like a FREAK! Alas, they would all fall victim and surrender what made them lustful to me! On the night a gorgeous young woman quickly scurried away from me after catching a glimpse of my

face and I pounced at her as to claim another face she changed before my eyes. To my own horror there stood not a woman before me but a man! A man, who without blinking, whipped out a pair of rusted handcuffs and slapped them on my wrists before I had time to act. Sadly, I knew I would never finish my mask as I had been caught and was now doomed to remain a hideous fiend.

The man took me to a hospital for a local psychologist to question my ways and my sanity. Two policemen sat on either side of me as to restrain my movements if need be. As the questions droned on and on, one of the officers made a move toward me as if to try to snatch away my mask. Alas, as I alluded his hands, the other officer moved quicker as to finally snatch the beautiful mask from my face. A bloodcurdling scream ripped from my vocal chords was never heard in this world.

"My face! My face! You must not look upon my hideous face! The creature under the mask is a disgusting thing that should never be allowed to be seen!"

The doctor realed back in horror. "My god man! Look what you've become! You've destroyed so much beauty just to sew them to one rotten piece of flesh! You never were a creature, nor ever a ghoul. You were always one of the more beautiful people of this society. People never stared at you in horror. People stared in admiration at the beauty of which your face held," he said as he held a mirror for me to gaze in. "Look, see what you've become. Look at the scratch marks, the stitch marks, the rotting features now mutilating your face! Now on your face see exactly what you were seeing before in your head now become real!"