

# FIGMENTS

word count:

1837

It wasn't the first time his wife Lucy had found him like this, staring at the bookcase full of his heroes. Baldacci, Burke, Connelly, DeMille, and the rest. None of them were helping by the look on James' face. "Come on guys, throw me a bone." He mumbled. No bones.

"Whatca doin'?" She knew what he was doing. He was soliciting inspiration. He was evidently experiencing writer's block again.

"You know what I'm doing...writer's block again." He walked over to his writing spot and sat down in front of his laptop. He started tapping on keys and after a few moments highlighted everything on the page and hit '*DELETE*'. James started over. Then he started over again. The third time didn't work but the fourth did. He started with a name... he always liked to start with a name and then build his character around that.

*'McGruder was the meanest man in Patrone Parish. Always had been. Billy Wilson had gone to grade school with him, then junior high and high school and one semester of junior college before they both had to drop out. Billy because his father died and his mother needed Billy to run the farm; Mac because HIS father went to prison and HIS mother needed Mac to earn enough money to keep her in booze. Billy never had any run-ins with Mean Mac but that didn't count for much. He knew Mac was like a hand grenade with the pin half pulled already and it didn't ever take much to set him off.'*

James read what he had typed and corrected the spelling of two words and read it again. He nodded approval to himself and continued.

*'Billy watched as the rusty old pick up truck made its way toward him on the dusty old Louisiana back-road. He hoped the Sheriff or Conservation Officer would show up soon. He had called nearly a half hour ago.'*

James wondered about the words “dusty” and “rusty” being so close together. Would they be distracting? He rewrote the line without *rusty* and then replaced it and took out *dusty* and then replaced it.

*“Doesn't seem to matter.” 'Billy seemed to mutter mostly to himself.'* James was starting to subconsciously develop an understanding of Billy's personality; how he would think and react to different situations. Billy and Mac were becoming real to James.

*'Billy knew Mean Mac's truck, everyone in Patrone Parish did, and avoided it whenever possible. His phone rang. He answered it. The caller was the county dispatcher. Nobody could get to him for at least an hour. A milk tanker from Harold's Dairy had blown a tire and run through a fence and cattle were roaming all over County route seven and Willie Harold and his wife were trying to round them up and needed help.'*

James pondered on whether or not to try to work in some sort of a line referring to “spilt milk.” He decided against it after several attempts that sounded childish.

*'Billy raised his hand halfway in a hello wave. “...Mac...How ya doin' today? Haven't seen ya in awhile.” Billy and Mean Mac had never been friends but they weren't enemies either. Billy was fairly sure he could take Mac in a fight but it wouldn't be easy. He thought Mac probably figured the same about him. They both seemed to practice a sort of back-woods detente.*

*“Ssappinin'? Was listenin' on the Po-lice scanner and heard ya needed somethin'.” Mac looked off the road toward the wet-weather pond that formed after every storm and didn't dry up for a few days. The pond filled a corner of Mean Macs property and Taylor Jensen's farm where it met with the dirt roadway, with about two and a half to three feet of water in an oval-ish sort of a shape about a hundred*

*feet across. Mac's gaze rested on the doe standing in knee deep water about thirty feet from one edge of the pond...with an apparently damaged front leg. It wasn't evident if it were broken or just badly twisted but it didn't matter. She was tangled up too badly in the fencing to work herself loose and no human would ever get close enough to help her without her panicking and making things worse. There was a small spotted fawn at the water's edge crying for her mother.'*

James scrolled to the top and scanned the page. Needed something. What? Perspective? Some kind of action? James read it three more times and then stood up and walked around the house for a couple minutes. Around the dining room table and around the island in the kitchen and around the couch in the living room and back to his writing spot in the library full of unhelpful heroes. He sat down and wrote a sentence and deleted it. He re-read everything and then smiled to himself and went to the very top and wrote a new beginning.

*'Wilson was trying to write a story for his college English class and having a difficult time coming up with an idea. His wife Wanda caught him staring at the books on their mantle and suggested he write about the deer they had seen alongside the road the other day. Wilson thought that was a good idea and began to think of a plot for the story that would make it interesting.'*

*"I know, I'll have some hard-heart-ed guy, put him in a touching situation like that one." Wanda nodded approval.*

Lucy reached over James' shoulder to point to a word. "You misspelled deer."

"No I didn't, Wilson did." James smiled at her as she laughed. He read the rest to Lucy and she looked thoughtful for a moment and told him it needed polishing but she thought it could be a good angle.

"You're writing a story about a guy writing a story...cool."

So James had Wilson continue to have Billy and Mean Mac stand there by the road looking at the doe in

the pond and then Mac would turn and walk back to his truck.

*“I already called the county but they can’t get nobody out here for a couple hours.” Billy told Mac as he turned and walked back towards his old truck.’*

James changed ‘nobody’ to ‘anyone’ and continued.

*‘Mac didn’t answer Billy. He opened the driver’s side door and reached over the back of the seat and pulled out his thirty-thirty.’*

James wasn’t sure if he should explain what a thirty-thirty was. He didn’t want to insult the reader by explaining everything as though he thought the readers were dummies...so he had “Wilson” do it for him.

*‘Mean Mac didn’t answer Billy. He opened his driver’s door and pulled out his rifle.’*

Better. James thought.

*‘Wanda said “Better.” She had been reading from over Wilson’s shoulder as he typed.’*

“Better.” Lucy told James from over his shoulder.

James was on a roll now and didn’t even acknowledge Lucy as he typed on.

*‘Wilson wanted to show just how mean Mean Mac was but didn’t think he could without confusing the reader. They had discussed the difference between showing and telling in his creative writing class but he still had difficulty getting his point across without several re-writes. He decided he could throw some stuff in later if he thought he needed to. He continued after proof-reading what he had already written.’*

*“Mac walked ponderously...”*

‘Was ponderously too fancy a word for Wilson?’ James wondered.

*“...back from his truck. Billy could sense that Mac wished neither of them were there, that the deer*

*wasn't there, that there was no fawn there, that this didn't have to happen."*

James had Wilson have Mac raise his rifle...

*'Billy thought he heard Mac whisper something and then the deafening report of the rifle startled him.'*  
*Wilson wrote. Wilson thought about how to explain that Billy thought Mac would take slow aim and then shoot the deer to put her out of her misery. Wilson wanted to somehow convey Billy's surprise that Mean Mac even cared.*

James thought on this a moment and decided he could edit it all and polish it up later.

*'Wilson typed and then edited and then typed more. "Billy still had ringing in his ears when the second shot rang out. The fawn fell to the ground less than a half second after her mother had splashed head-first into the storm filled pond waters. Mean Mac had levered the second round into the chamber so quickly Billy hardly noticed. He stood there in the roadside dust as Mac walked past him.*

*"See ya Billy." Was all Mac said.*

James was running several scenarios through his mind trying to determine how to get the best impact.

*'The impact of the rifle bullet threw the fawn backwards and to the ground and it lay there un-moving. Billy looked at Mean Mac as he walked past him within inches. Billy couldn't believe it. There was a tear on McGruder's cheek.'* Wanda said *"I like that."*

Lucy made a small sound under her breath that James interpreted as approval. James re-proofed the whole thing from the beginning and didn't feel that it was right. He read it again. James stood up and walked around his kitchen. He walked clockwise and then he walked counter-clockwise as he read and re-read. He sat back down and started to spell-check again and cut and paste and delete and rewrite. He thought about Wilson. Did he even need Wilson? Was Wilson confusing an otherwise decent story? James thought he might finish up and then he might try to do away with Wilson and see how that worked.

James' wife Linda came in and ask him what he was doing.

James looked at her with a strange curiosity on his face. Who was she? Suddenly she was gone. Lucy was standing there. James felt uneasy. He leaned against the island he and his brother-in-law had built for Wanda...no...Lucy...LUCY! His wife's name was LUCY! James remembered that he and his brother-in-law had made the island but he didn't remember the actual *making* of it. He walked on shaky legs to the window but couldn't see beyond the edge of the page. What was happening to him? James sat down and stared at the island counter-top as it began to disappear. The island dissolved into pica type. The strainer and colander and chicken pictures and chicken pitchers started to swirl into elite type and vanish and James started to realize what was happening. James started to fade. He suddenly knew that he was just a figment.

James realized that he too was just someone's fictional character. He looked down at the floor in despair but saw instead the backspace rapidly consuming line upon line ascending toward him like a Pacman and before he could react in any way James was gon