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Editorial

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Editorial

Peggy Brown

There's an ice chandelier hanging off the trellis outside my study near where a brown squirrel has been digging through the ice for acorns. In the morning quiet Oscar Wilde's *Lady Bracknell* has challenged Penelope on the earnestness of weaving. Ray Bradbury's Peter has just invited King Lear into the Veldt, and Sancho Panza recently reached mid-life and has challenged Stephen King to a duel. Lady Macbeth sits next to a grey-haired woman on the plane my character is taking to Madrid. In my habit of reading several books simultaneously, I find the characters encounter each other and begin an independent life of their own on my page.

Such is the nature of characters. Once someone gives them life, they cannot die. Protean, they take on new shapes in readers' imaginations and mate with residents there, creating Molly Blooms, Stephen Dedaluses.

So what does this mean to you, dear reader, who have kindly purchased (or are standing in the CCCC Bookstore reading) a copy of *Forces*.

First, it means that you, in reading these works, may allow the characters, their ideas, to enter your mind. Beware! Once they move in, they check out the other residents there and strike up acquaintances. Strange events may occur: marriages, births, natural deaths, dangerous liaisons, duels, arguments, riots, or epic journeys. You become the artist of the new heroes, willing or not, and become an accomplice to the marriage of my characters and yours in the vital recesses of your imagination.

You become an artist. Don't deny it. Remember when you drew stars on your bedroom wall to practice making them and then, faced with the prospect of your mother finding them, discovered they were permanently affixed and to scrub them only smeared the blue crayola to a blur that became glaringly visible? You sat trembling when she walked in the room. Only when she did not recognize your penchant for emulating Monet did your creative act loom deadly. Or what of the picture of a magnificent purple horse that you drew in first grade only to have your teacher rave about Anthony's BROWN one? How many horses did you draw after that, hum? Admit it. Most of us want to be artists, whether we make use of our star-driven talent or not. We simply want to design the Christmas card that makes everyone remark, "That was the neatest Christmas card—did you have someone design it for you?" Or in Pictionary, to draw the quick sketch that not only wins the point but gets passed around to the other players who shrink in admiration.

No. Artists make us feel inferior. Yet, I want to explore the possibility that an artist lives in all of us, but, like

characters, he/she lurks in the soundproof room of our imagination.

So, how do we bring her/him to the surface? To start, I'm sure that all of you have heard that artists are decadent. Our first step, then, will be to become decadent. Not irreversibly decadent, only mildly decadent. As a start, go to the nearest mall that has a Chocolate Chip Cookie Factory and ask for one of their bran muffins—a justifiable corruption due to its fiber content—and a cup of coffee WITH CREAM. Do try cream in your coffee just this once. All artists know they must take risks, break routines, try new things—to explore their sensitivities. Next, sit at the table with the umbrella (that one, there, next to the palm) that overlooks the fountain. Dump the container of half and half into your coffee and watch the cream collide with the black coffee in energetic swirls that rise and fall in kinetic shapes. Don't hurry the process. Watch to see how long it takes for the movement to slow—you'll probably stir before the swirling completely stops—I did. Now, before you begin to read, break pieces from the bran muffin and let the alluring texture seduce your senses as you wash it down with your first cautious sip of coffee. Don't pick up the journal until you have indulged your craving for the sweet, nutty bites that please the connoisseur you have become. Listen to the sounds of the fountains as droplets charge the air with energy before they fall to merge with the billions others before swirling to fly again in their free dance above the common waters below. Such is your imaginative flight if you allow the dance.

Now dance with your new friends in *Forces*.

Cover: Kay Jacobs created the artwork for the cover. She is a student in advertising art.