

NEWSLETTER



OLIVE GRAYSON, AUTHOR

July 2026



Happy 250th
Birthday America



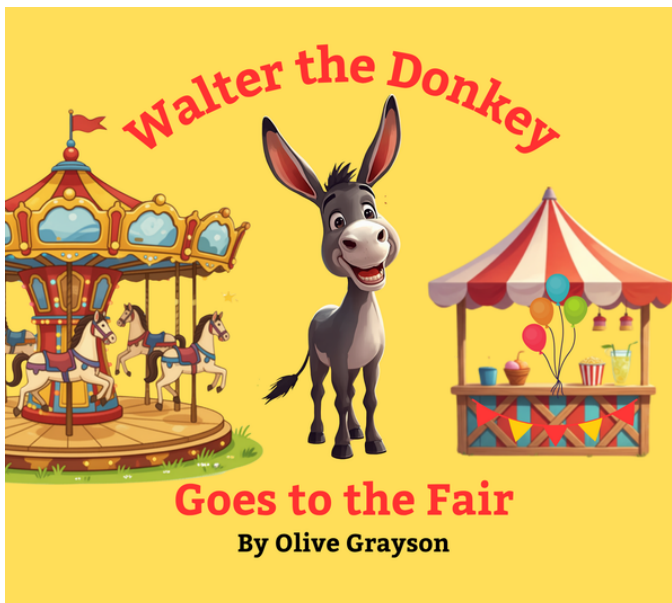
Welcome!

I hope you enjoy my
first monthly
newsletter

Welcome to the very first edition of my author newsletter. I'm thrilled you're here. This space is where I'll share new writing, behind-the-scenes glimpses into the creative process, and updates on my new projects. If you enjoy what you read, please show your support by buying my book and forwarding this newsletter to others. Thank you!



**I just published my
first book!**



*Walter the Donkey has one favorite day
of the year-Fair Day!*

*With cotton candy mischief, friendly
animals, and exciting rides Walter's big
heart and personality shine through as
he makes new friends and
unforgettable memories.*

Walter, my miniature donkey, sparked the heart of this tale—and with fair season in full swing, the setting couldn't have been more perfect.

Walter came home to us in 2024. He was a rescue from a petting zoo. He's very chill, sweet, and gets along with everyone he meets.



This short story was inspired by a prompt given at my writing club...the beginning highlighted in red was our springboard!

WITHIN THE HOWL



The annual celebration and spring parade was in full swing, everyone in town lining the streets until...the director yelled, “Cut! Cut! What's wrong with the damn dog?”

“Shit.” Ryan started rubbing his temple to ward off the inevitable throbbing. The star of the scene’s incessant barking quickly gave way to howling. Ryan’s promotion to first assistant director demanded more of his sanity than it was worth.

“What the hell Ryan?” Aaron demanded as he jumped from his director’s chair. As a new director, the pressure Aaron felt to deliver ‘the next big hit’ was understandable, and unrealistic.

“I don’t know, let me find out. We can’t stop for long, we’ve got nearly a hundred people on set and we’re short on time and money,” Ryan said as the second A.D. approached. “LeeAnn keep everyone on set. Have hair and make-up do some touch ups and get the crew to swing the shot to the other side of the street and will work around the dog.”

“I’m on it.” LeeAnn snapped.

Ryan grabbed his bullhorn, "Everyone, hold your places!"

The cast and crew collectively froze for a moment. Then the A.C kicked back on and the stuffy sound stage that sweltered under the key lights appeared to sigh with relief. The murmurs of the actors and crew quickly swelled in unison, drowning out the mechanical jangling of the overhead fans. The vibrant scene of the small-town parade looked deceptively joyous when the reality of filming this spectacle was nothing short of torture.

This is Ryan’s first project with LeeAnn and her direct no-nonsense approach has proven invaluable. She carries herself like she’s still in the Army, an asset when you have dozens of adults who wander if not wrangled, kids that keep trying to eat the prop food, and a director that is on the verge of a stroke.

Ryan waved the dog and his handler over to the corner of the stage. “Look man, I don’t know what’s gotten into him. He’s never done this before,” Jackson pleaded while cinching up on Max’s leash. As owner/operator of Jackson’s Minstrel Mutt’s his reputation was hinging on the whims of a 50-pound lab who’s lost all interest in being a parade mascot. His barking stopped in less than a minute, but a minute is too long when dialogue is being recorded.

LeeAnn’s voice cracked through the walkie-talkie, “Ryan, lighting needs at least an hour maybe two to change the shot. Over.”

Arron chimed in next, “Figure this shit out. I’m going to my trailer. Over!”

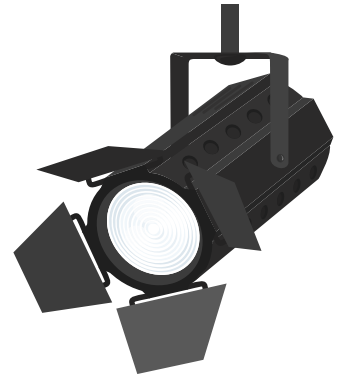
“Fuck.” Ryan mumbles to himself.

“Just give me a few minutes with Max. I’ll walk him, maybe he just has to go to the bathroom.”

“Fine, walk the damn dog,” Ryan said while grabbing his walkie. “LeeAnn, keep everyone in place. I’ll see if the caterers can manage lunch now.”

Ryan’s attempts to reach the caterer on his walkie proved futile. Transversing the sound stage, stepping over cables, and side-stepping the restless crew Ryan found himself outside needing a few moments for his eyes to adjust to the bright sun. They were lucky to have the stage next door, stage 11, as their base camp and the extra’s holding area. Stage 11 was eerily quiet, too quiet. Tables and chairs were set up along the north side as they had been for meal breaks, yet there were no caterers bustling about prepping food. Just the standard craft service tables splattered with snacks for daylong grazing. The two dozen or so hair and make-up tables seem abandoned too. Ryan stepped back outside and was going to head to the next sound stage when Jackson and Max caught up to him.

Jackson sputtered, “There’s something wrong!



Something’s not right!”

“What? What’s not right?”

“There’s no one here. Everyone’s gone. The lot is empty.”

“Maybe there was an evacuation? There’s no one on 11 either.” Ryan picked up his walkie, “LeeAnn, I need you outside.”

“Copy”

Jackson appeared visibly shaken when LeeAnn arrived and they clued her in.

“Okay listen. Put the dog back in his crate and you two make your way to the front gate,” Ryan said directing Jackson and LeeAnn. “Talk to security and find out what’s going on. I’ll move all the performers to 11 and tell them we need to clear the set for lighting. I’ll tell the crew to take ten.”

Thirteen minutes later, Jackson and LeeAnn reported back to stage 11 with no more news than when they left. There was no one at security. The main gate was abandoned, only empty cars lined up. Just as Ryan started to ask a question Max started barking and then howling, just as before with no warning, high pitched and shrill.

The performers didn’t seem to even notice Max and his antics. They were all so immersed in their own activities: snacking, playing cards, and some even napping—how with all this noise seemed impossible to Ryan.

Max quieted down suddenly, like before, but Ryan’s headache decided to make an appearance anyway. With a deep throbbing growing at his temples, Ryan continued, “keep everyone here, let me go back to set and come up with a game plan.”

As Ryan opened and closed the door to the sound stage that held the abandoned spring parade, an eerily quietness swallowed the room. The fake trees gently swayed with the blowing fans and discarded prop food lined the tables set behind the grand marshal float that Max was riding, the impetus for this shit day. “Where the hell is everyone?” Ryan mumbled out loud, to no one.

“Ryan,” LeeAnne’s voice crackled again over the walkie. “Cells seem to be down, a few are starting to get a little squirrely over her. Over.”

Ryan answered back, “We may have a little situation here. Let me go talk to Aaron.” As Ryan stepped outside and swung around the sound stage he could see the door to Aaron’s trailer, wide open. Stepping inside gingerly, Ryan peered and discovered the trailer like he did the set, empty. “LeeAnn, meet me outside,” Ryan walkied with composure despite the dread that was settling over him.

“Copy.”

Under the hot noon sun outside stage 11 Ryan snapped at LeeAnn, “Everyone’s gone, they just fucking left.”

“Okay, well you’re gonna be more pissed. A group of five were seen leaving by someone who was told they’re making a McDonalds run. A few others disappeared for a smoke. And that older guy that was playing the popcorn vendor left about 20 minutes ago. He didn’t say anything, just grabbed his bags and left.”

“That guy?” Ryan pointed to a breathless balding man heading towards them struggling to carry both his tote and wardrobe bag.



Without even trying to catch his breath, “Hey, hey, we can’t leave. The parking lot is jammed up. Cars everywhere, but no drivers. Where are the drivers?”

Ryan and LeeAnn look at each other with raised eyebrows and obvious concern.

“Let’s get you inside so you can sit down and cool off,” LeeAnn stated as she put her hand on his shoulder.

He immediately shrugged LeeAnn’s hand away, “I’m not going back in there with that devil dog. He sensed something, he knows something.”

Ryan thought to himself before speaking. The dog freaked out during the parade scene and everyone outside the stage disappeared. The dog freaked again and only those on stage 11 could be found. Where the hell is Aaron? Where’s the crew?

Trying to remain calm Ryan said, “Well, I’m burning up out here. I’m going back inside.” Ryan opened the door to stage 11 and LeeAnn followed him inside. As soon as the door shut closed Max started barking and howling, again. Ryan’s headache continued its assault and now his right eye took on a twitch.



The unrest inside stage 11 was beginning to grow. The questions and complaints were no longer directed at each other; they were aimed at Ryan and LeeAnn like poisoned darts. LeeAnn grabbed the bullhorn from earlier and used her best military voice to quell the unrest and restore order.

After everyone seemed to settle down and talk amongst themselves, LeeAnn turned to Ryan. "Thought about what he said, about the dog. He barks, people disappear. But have you noticed, not those in his immediate vicinity," LeeAnn said as she waved her hand in the direction of the muffled conversations.

"Yeah, I caught that."

Ryan turned to step outside to clear his head. One foot out the door and Ryan stopped in his tracks. The old popcorn vendor was gone, but his two bags were left in his place. Ryan's mind quickly ran through every movie he's seen that had people disappearing, alien invasions, deadly viruses...nothing he could think of even touched this.

"Ryan," LeeAnn said quietly behind him as though she knew he was about to jump out of his skin.

Ryan looked at LeeAnn and then pointed in the direction of the popcorn vendor's bags. Words were not necessary.



FUN FACT



I earned a black belt in karate a few years ago.

My kids and I took this journey together, but since moving to Ohio in November, 2023 we've only been to a few classes. After a majority vote, we decided to take a break and pursue other interests for a while.

Since then, I've discovered that I love painting!

I took an oil painting class with my kids to get started, and shortly afterwards discovered the joy of watercolors. I've laid claim to some space in the basement to carve out a little art studio.

I'm looking forward to developing my skill set and to eventually craft little gifts to share.



Thank you for visiting and sharing my website link, buying my book, and reading this newsletter.

I greatly appreciate your time and support.

Love,

Olive Grayson



olivegrayson.com