

LITTLE RIVERS: A STORY OF HALEY'S HYPERHYDROSIS HANDS

by Charles J. March III

WHY WE LIKE IT: *Quote: '...she crossed her arms and grabbed the gameskeeper's pale and hale left hand with hers, and at that moment, their arches formed a fundament of freedom, and it was like the universe took a deep pant.'* *A strange and hauntingly prepossessing story that reads like poetry and settles in the mind like a dream awakened. Words and phrases tumble in startling deconstructions and their textures contend for melodic harmonies that resonate through the dense, gorgeously smithed alliterative prose like birds of paradise.* *Quote: '...she stood them up and hurried to sit on the kitsch, backless bar stools the barback had situated in the back by the kitchen and bathrooms.'* *We love the way the author explores alternative meanings to familiar words, word order and concept exchange. Snatches of dialogue gleam like starbursts: "Well, sanguinely he's sagacious enough to decipher them," delphied Haley.'* *If you think a girl suffering from chronically sweating hands is an unpromising subject for a short story, this dazzling Nabokovian prestidigitation of dancing syllables will shut down the argument once and for all.*

As Palm Sunday drew near, I was reminded of the deep and profundus times I've had with my brother, Ryan, and his young lady, Haley, in Chiraq, The O.C., and elsewhere.

I thirst for this to be a tributary to her, owing to the fact that she has the freshest freshets anywhere, and since I know she'll never send him down the river; however, she'll most likely take up ligament litigation against me and give me the finger after flicking through this, for

lightly extending the tendons of her truth. Albeit, little does she admit—Ryan might put a ring on it.

At this point, you may have a funny bone to pick with me, due to striking a raw radial nerve with my radicalness; but I assure you—the subject of her handedness is a heavy one.

This brevis story not only deals with a dyad of youthful lovers trying to figure out life's phalangic equation and metacarpal metaphysics, but is also a diegesis that chronicles the chronic condition of a naïve Fräulein's hyperhidrosis nieves. It begins in the Ganges infested City by the Lake, at a tiny restaurant off of Canal St, on an eve during the Christmas season *a couple of* years ago.

In the wishy-washy neon glow of a hole in the wall, her aquamarine optics twinkled like a scintillating star on a twilight thalassic, and her old chestnut postiche cascaded down-and-out like the ripples left after ships passing in the night. It was manifest who my man's best friend was going to be in those hours of darkness, and for many moons to come; but hitherto he received her digits and proceeded to dogg her, he cat-called her with his Siamese eyes and batted his long lashes at her on his way to the baño. He has an aptness for doing this whilst flying past beautiful barflies he's titillated by, and he recognized that there was something magical about this one, because her mitts moved quicker from his keek than her peepers, and they were extremely tawny—even the palms.

Despite this sheepishness, she hypocritically thought him a bit of a pussy for not saying anything, but he was in fact using opposition reflex, a canine training technique our Father taught him while wrangling Rottweilers when he was a runt. She was hoping that he'd wind up being her black knight in perspire glistening, garbage bag (helping him to cut weight for an upcoming amateur wrestling tournament) armor, after what she just went through while waiting hand and foot on some foot-in-mouth diseased derelicts.

And Ryan had indeed just witnessed one of these piss artists trying to spit game at Haley, after he peered the half-pint up and down while giving him his beer, "Hey, honey, how's about you get off your feet and have a seat right here," as he patted his lap with a creepy sleight of hand. "No, thanks, I'd rather do a handstand," she rendered, as she stood them up and hurried to sit on the kitsch, backless bar stools the barback had situated in the back by the kitchen and bathrooms.

This diminutive handmaiden fathomed that she had an interest in my brother, and wanted to invest in him by depositing her number, but a flood of trumped-up fears began running through her veins and into the depths of her soul, due to him being too hot to handle, and even though she's hands down one of the coolest people I ken, and is far more fun than a super soaker, she became hot and bothered by the thought of this teeny-weeny George Clooney look-alike coming out of the comfort station and giving her the cold shoulder again, with bupkis to talk to but his hand. So she bolted into the little loo, locked the door, and started taking a bird bath in the sink to cleanse her hands (one washing the other and vice versa) of the muck sweat circumstance that surfaced, in case her and Ryan ended up coming into contact with one another and shaking hands, at which point she could have an excuse and remark, "Oh, my apologies, I just washed

my hands before returning to work.” Knowing my easy going bro, he’d probably reciprocate with, “No sweat,” and/or “Don’t sweat it!”

As a rule of thumb, this is regularly what happens when her rivers rage—it precipitates her perturbation, and causes her to sweat the small stuff and runoff. She actually habitually just bathes in sweat, wiping herself with her wet paws like a feminine grimalkin, but even they need a rinse from time to time, usually as a last resort, like this one. And speaking of feverish felines—every time she golfs, her handicap causes her to scratch herself, and she gets the yips.

She also anticipated that this decontaminating would convey on multiple levels that she was a very hygienic girl and didn’t have the clap or anything, but as she ogled into the looking glass after splashing herself all about, she took a sip of the faucet’s well water, in the hopes of it causing her hands to run dry, and she started to get really self-conscious, thinking herself a hot mess, and began to cry. Be that as it may, most of mankind would contend that she’s a perfect 10, minus her manus, much like Megan Fox and Handgelina Jolie, if they were to break a sweat when going on stage. And, fortunately for her—her Lubriderm faucet fingers are a turn-on. Her spongy savoiardi, reverse osmosis, omnipresent wetness has the ability to boost any man’s ego, and obliterate impotence.

But for a lass, I digress. Back to the matter at hand.

The situation in the outhouse was starting to get out of hand. Like a schoolgirl, she started getting really giddy, and everything felt backwards, due to her autonomic dysreflexia, much like

my brother's dyslexic reactions (notwithstanding, he can read people like the back of his hand, and hand picked this pygmy honey, because *the one* expression was written all over her face). Her right hand didn't know what the left was doing, and she started to wonder if this is what love feels like. But the hour was at hand where she didn't have anymore time on her hands to trance. She had to get off of her hands, which were underneath her on top of the thunderbox, and get back to the business at hand. Howbeit, she began to cerebrate—on the one hand, she could just loiter in the water closet until her dikes broke loose—and on the second hand, she was still on the clock, and knew she needed to take the law of attraction into her own hands. So this queen of my brother's heart took the upper hand by royally flushing the toilet with the hand(s) she was dealt, as a front for her latrine trip, and after wringing out her fingers, she shamefully came out with them up in the air and swinging, so they could air dry. As she did this, she blazoned to her coworkers, but really to the patrons, "We're out of hand towels," so nobody would interrogate this eccentric sweat gland, love-struck server.

When she returned to her section, the luses were still there, lusting after her, but the tables had turned. She had a renewed sense of confidence, partly because she noticed that one of her playfellows was waiting on Ryan and his friends, and she could force her helping hand.

"Palmela, do you remember what drink that man ordered offhand?" Haley cross-examined.

"A diamantina cocktail," Palmela mentioned.

This passed her pilot study and proved that he wasn't like *the other guys*, so she proceeded to give her number in the form of handwritten Roman numerals to Ryan, via Palmela.

“These letters/numbers are all smudged!” Palmela exclaimed.

“Well, sanguinely he’s sagacious enough to decipher them,” delphied Haley.

When Palmela asked Haley why she was taking such a cryptic approach, she contended, “My hands are connected to my brain, but have a mind of their own. They channel ideas from my streams of consciousness.”

As Palmela handed Haley’s sopping number to Ryan, the Donald Trump lookalike drunkard was beginning to harass Haley again, and Ryan beheld her starting to sweat bullets, looking like she was getting ready to blast the man with a bitch-slapping, brackish water backhand. Ryan wanted to interfere, but didn’t want to get caught red-handed, engaged in hand-to-hand combat, where he’d surely beat the blood orange man to a pulp. That would really precipitate some blood, sweat, and tears. So he decided to take his leave.

Haley watched as he walked out to his truck, and wished upon a comet that he’d pick her up later from the bar. This homuncular girl’s Horner’s syndrome kicked in, and she started envisioning looking at him with her naked eye, and her as the focal point of his, as her astronomical assets and conjunction lay in, and on his trunk. In that short-period of thought, she realized that a celestial body like Ryan only orbits a girl like her once or twice in a lifetime, so she tried to remain calm and collected while waiting for him to call on her, but her hope was dwindling, as it was getting a little too late.

However, her wish was his command, as the little leaguer did indeed crack the code left by his sweetheart’s sweat, and called her from a decrepit pay phone, due to not receiving a signal from

his ivory cell tower. She knew he was invested in her as well, due to depositing money instead of making a collect call, so she tried her best to collect her wits before she spoke, but got all choked up, and needed to hit the head again to hydrate, as she had lost a lot of electrolytes through her hands (she once thought about selling her sweat as mineral water to help the clean water crisis, but didn't see any silver lining in it).

When she was finally able to easily speak, she said/asked, "Hi, how's it going?"

"It's going. And when I say it, I mean you—you're going to come with me to my winter sweat lodge in the Forest Preserve District. Meet me in my Dodge."

Haley was so intrigued by this stranger taking the ram by the horns and commanding her to go away with him into the copse where anything could happen, but if she once wished for her hands to be nailed to a cross, she was now incontrovertibly inclined to claw her way to heaven, even if it meant fighting for her life in the heat of psychotic eroticism.

"Okey-dokey, let me see if I can get off of work early."

When she asked her boss if she could leave to give love a chance, she was met with the established, high-handed response...

"I'm parasympathetic, Haley, but my hands are tied. We need all hands on deck. Now, please get yours dirty, so we can make light work of what's left."

Even though she was making money hand over duke, the cash that was in her customer's hands changed with hers for the last time, and she handed in her notice that she'd been planning to do for days, before walking out the entrance of the sweat shop and parting ways.

As she took hold of the handrail and traipsed down the stairs to his truck, she thought about how the touch barrier ice breaker would go, as she was always tactful with tactile situations, and a lot went into figuring out what to do with her fingers. She was in a cold sweat, so she plunged her hands into her pockets where there were some hand warmers, but only for a brief moment, because she didn't want to burn him. When she got in the vehicle, even though my brother is a lefty, he put out his right hand, as he wanted to unconsciously convey that he was going to be her right-hand man. Haley put hers in his, but couldn't keep her hands off of him, so as The Beatles' first American number 1 hit started playing in her head, she crossed her arms and grabbed the gamekeeper's pale and hale left hand with hers, and at that moment, their arches formed a fundament of freedom, and it was like the universe took a deep pant. All was well with the world, as it was in the palms of their hands. She now knew she had him under her opposable thumb, and that he'd soon be consuming melted M&M's out of the palm of her hand (time will tell if he bites it).

As their meat hooks were interlocked, they both felt new and infinite power flow into one another. His flexor muscles flexed around hers, and he lubricated her lumbrical muscles as he massaged her pinky finger. Then her intrinsic desires became inextricable, and she went hat in hand by asking if he wanted to lay in the bed of his truck with her and hold hands.

So they skipped shacking up at the lodge, and proceeded to have a hand-held love all-night long in the parking lot.

I love it when their rivers are braided. It's very touching, and makes me feel like we all enter the folds of their snuff boxes. I picture their contrasting fingers as all the colors of the world's rainbow, together, joined in brotherly and harmonious betterment.

In the morning, he took her back to her mother's dwelling where Haley lived, and since Haley felt that she had been in such good hands—there wasn't a drop of sweat on hers. When she went inside, she exclaimed, "Look, Ma, no sweat on my hands!" Her mother rolled her eyes, because Haley had forgotten, again, that her mother had recently gone as blind as a bat. Her mother also distinguished that Haley had been drinking (she had polished off part of a handle before leaving work, as it helps to steady her hands), because when Haley is under the influence, she slurs her words, due to the slurry of liquid that forms sediment at the mouth of her rivers. When it gets to that point, she encourages Haley to use sign language, because she can still espy the shadow play of her hand puppets, and would rather not discern any scent of her sloppiness. But Haley was way too excited to do that.

"Haley, what's gotten into you?"

"A man's gotten into me, Mama, and I think he might be the one to illuminate our survival and steal us away from this dark carpal tunnel!"

They indubitably abducted each other's hearts, and their fingerprints were all over the local love scene as they started going steady over the following couple of months; but it wasn't all puppies and rainbows. There were some inflammatory moments, but they usually just smoked peace pipes and billabongs to alleviate their love handles and joints. On Valentine's Day, Ryan picked out a French Bulldog for Haley, because he noticed that the pup was sweating like a little pig,

and he wanted to do something nice for Haley, to help her feel beleaguered by others like her. They named him Capone, after the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre. Haley loves that whelp, and frequently puts her paws up to his (like human beings have a habit of doing with their sucklings and such), because they're as soft and smooth as mascarpone, but also as practice, so she can feel comfortable when having to touch others.

If their romantic entanglement ever hits bedrock and they have a little Bamm-Bamm of their own, Haley's hands will rule the world by rocking his cradle.

And speaking of little bambinos, Haley is now working hand in glove with Ryan at his baseball academy as a hired hand, as she has a natural knack for breaking in baseball mitts, due to the heat and humidity produced by her hands. They've really turned the place into a mom and pop shop, with Haley being the first face the customers see at the front desk, and Ryan waiting on deck with his deckhands to do lessons in the batting cage batter's boxes. They keep things chirpy at work, and you can occasionally catch Ryan trundling Haley around in one of the hand trucks from his father's moving company pantehnicon parked next door. Natheless, he still sometimes gets caught in the little phoresis spider monkey's web when he tries taming his shrew's River Thames.

It was all fun and games until one day he detected Haley melting down some of the baseball bats, to form a highly concentrated aluminum treatment for her hands. He had recently descried his angel struggling and using formaldehyde dust in the hopes of preventing chronic perspiration, but didn't know things had gotten this demonic. When I questioned her opinion on what caused

her condition and what else she's done to remedy it, she responded, "I suppose I have POEMS syndrome." Notwithstanding this, due to my training as a colloquial "doc," I'd say the cause is causalgia. She also uttered that one day she went to get a boob job (even though she can win any sweat t-shirt contest), and figured she might as well start getting Botox injections in her hands, but they engendered syringomyelia and made things worse. She just about broke the bank trying to curb her brooks, even going so far as to buy some holy water (which was blessed by a shaman) off of Amazon.

Although, nowadays, everything is pretty much smooth sailing—but there are still highs and lows; however, even during her night sweats, she's still his little miss sunshine. Specifically, she had an especially gorgeous depression when Ryan went to Canyon, TX, to host a baseball clinic, and she also had a devilishly offhandish hangover when her and Ryan came to see me in Orange County, after visiting one of Ryan's university teammates in Riverside. She was very dehydrated, due to her Gatorade continually slipping out of her palms, and it wasn't until I put some expired ondansetron in them that she was able to keep some fluids down.

What will betide Ryan & Haley? The sky's the limit; however, she's frightened of heights. I got a fix on this, because last Christmas, while we visited my Mom on the fifth floor of the infirmary she labors at, Haley took a dekko down onto lobby, then gyrated to me with a nervous excitement and pleasantly exclaimed, "Look, C.J., my hand lines are like little rivers!" This is when I savvied that they'd always be my lifeline to a healthy propinquity.

Optimistically, hope will hot spring eternal, and they'll blow up like a hand grenade; regardless, let's just pray that the mercury lines in her hands don't poison her and retrograde. Perchance, the día will come, if it's God (the phosphorescence of the world)'s will, where they make it to the spire on time and walk hand-in-hand down the aisle, a while after Ryan asks for her hand in marriage.

I believe we're all pretty bent on Ryan and his swain building their life around the baseball institute, but they mouthed interest in wanting to peregrinate, possibly winding up out here with me or somewhere in the Southwest. So they are currently going with the flow, meandering around the country. And I have to hand it to them—because they are doing everything hands-free, without any hand-outs or hand-me-downs—except for my Dad's beloved Bluetooth that he bestowed upon Ryan before departing the hardball venture and heading off on an avant-garde adventure.

Will the twain of them make it to the rivers of Phoenix and the Pacific Ocean before skinny dipping in the Dead Sea? We'll see. Nothing's foreshoreway. God only knows where time and *the bends* of their rivers go.

Contemporarily, if you'll dispense me, I'm having a bout of scrivener's palsy and am pretty petered out—but I fancy my hand's job is ancient history.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *To the gentle reader—thank you. I hope you enjoyed what you probably just painstakingly consumed.*

I was inspired to write this story after Haley excitedly turned to tell me that her palm lines were like little rivers. It felt like lightning had struck me, and I, for whatever reason(s) found a lot of meaning in that very human divulgence, as I am also no stranger to diaphoretic panic attacks. I was honored that she chose me and I believe it brought us all closer, making us more embracing of ourselves and others.

Per what I believe was divine guidance, I knew I needed to tell the love story of their relationship in a humorous and interesting way, for myself, for my family and for anyone else who might care. I've been in the habit lately of writing ridiculous short stories with common themes and may someday compile them into a collection.

I have too many influences to list but I am moved by anything that is avant-garde, dark, experimental, surreal, absurd, postmodern, witty, funny, vulnerable, innovative, chaotically organized etc. Pretty much everything that the editors here seem to appreciate. To perhaps give but one name, I suppose I'll say...William S. Burroughs.

BIO: Charles J. March III is a US Navy hospital corpsman veteran from Chicago, who is currently trying to live an eclectic life with an interesting array of creatures in Orange County, California. His work had appeared in *Literary Orphans* and is forthcoming from *Stinkwaves*.

