the INEFFABLE hat

By M. T. Williams

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WHY I LIKE IT: *Fiction Editor JOEY CRUSE writes…*

Oh, dear reader, it is with great irony that I present to you a description of M. T. Williams', "The Ineffable Hat."

The story's premise is simple. A woman meets a man with an unexplainable hat. When she wants to try it on, the man not only thinks that it is a good idea, but produces a new hat specifically for her to have. The man leaves, the woman puts on her new hat, and a stranger compliments her.

Therein lies the entire plot of this jaunty short story, but not the entirety of its enjoyment.

Ineffableness, for those who may not already know, is the indescribable inability of words to compensate for the experience of greatness, wonderment, or extremity; it's something akin to hearing Alanis Morrisette open her mouth to speak in Dogma: if we were to actually have the words to understand what was being presented, our heads and hearts would explode out of our bodies in great humor.

I think that this is where the heart of Williams' work lies, its playfulness. While words are unable to express how wonderful the hat is, words are exactly the only medium by which the hat can be processed, "a multifarious and crystalline explosion, reflected and refracted in impossible planes and colours through infinite refinement, on simplistic foundations."

Reading this piece is as if you were the fulcrum of a seesaw, constantly being forced to balance what is being meant and knowing the fact that there is no meaning to be taken from something indescribable. You aren't stuck between a rock and a hard place. You're fine, you're happy, you've just received a new hat. The metaphor is there, but just out of reach of description.

That play with words is what makes this short story worth reading. The playfulness, while knowing that no matter how desperately we may try to state our simple subjectivity we are always limited from perception to the message, knowing that we may get as close to true perfection of description as possible but will always be just an atom's ass away from our own Truth reaching another, is where this story's power lies.

I've always loved the beauty and danger that is inherent in metaphor. "The Ineffable Hat," is a lovely reminder of both the joy and fury that words create in us.

I hope you enjoy this story as much as I did.

QUALITY QUOTABLE *(for the love of language)…*'There was a flash as the man spun in a wild, enthusiastic gambol. Light emanated from the top of his head.'

THE INEFFABLE HAT

"This hat is ineffable," he said.

She had to agree. The way it contoured his head, at once enlarging and somehow, amplifying his cranium, struck her as near impossible. Unexplainable.

"Might I try it?" she asked.

He agreed, but only on the terms that she have a hat of her own. There was a flash as the man spun in a wild, enthusiastic gambol. Light emanated from atop his head. She held up her hands to shield her eyes and something dropped into her lap – a brand new hat. She picked the newly formed hat up in her hands and examined it closely, before placing it on her head. There was something wonderful about the hat, at once masterfully complex and wonderfully benign.

The hat was indeed ineffable, she decided, faceted as it was to astutely represent the whole of the deftly transcendent and the undeniably simple. How like life, she thought, as the man bounded away, hat both askew and not askew - a multifarious and crystalline explosion, reflected and refracted in impossible planes and colours through infinite refinement, on simplistic foundations. She adjusted the hat on her head. A passerby smiled at her.

"Nice hat."

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *This story was actually written for a beer label. A craft brewery held a contest for flash fiction to print on a label, and given that I enjoy a cold brew now and again, I thought, "Why not?" Patterns have always been interesting to me, and the best systems begin with simple concepts that enable a great deal more complexity.*

Water is something everyone understands. It's two basic components. But water mean a glass full from the tap or it can mean an ocean. Water can be dead still or it can smash cities. It's something so integral to what we are or how we exist at all, that it becomes wondrous to see the complexity that results. The best systems are always based on simple ideas extrapolated. The worst have no such basis, like telecom regulation. The brewery's logo involved a hat, and their name suggested the concept - a refined fool. Simplicity and complexity melded together – one of my favourite threads to pull.

I'm very much a child of the alternative music industry - 70s/80s punk and new wave, 90s grunge - I've always appreciated raw emotion over technical skill (although it's always nice if you can combine them, Radiohead or Tragically Hip-style). As a result, my influences couldn't help but be authors like William Gibson, Neil Gaiman and Chuck Palahniuk, with a healthy dollop of the Beat and Hippie Generations, and some rebellious classic lit to boot. Perspective is everything.

AUTHOR BIO: M.T. Williams is born and raised in Southwestern Ontario, with a quick jaunt to Finland in his teenage years. He is currently living among the corn with his wife and stepdaughter and far too many cats. He can be found on Twitter @emptywill13 and on his website, emptywill.com.