

Measly, Arthur: Deceased

In a truly wonderful, terrible moment, all that was Arthur Measly ceased to be. There was not much left that ceased to be but regardless of the deficiency, it ceased to be; a smooth bore deliverance and Arthur was free. Finally, free. It had been some time since Arthur Measly had known any freedom. When you or I for that matter feel free we are typically enjoying ourselves; we feel free when we are happily enjoying said freedom. Arthur in an act of both self-preservation and self-destruction chose to obliterate that kind of freedom—instead, he found another kind of freedom. A freedom from man's greatest oppressor: time. A rush of blood swelled within him as he found himself on a park bench.

Before the darkness could overtake dusk, Arthur reclined and turned toward him. He was beautiful to him. The Bench creaked as he put his arm around him, and Arthur was happy. The old, tired wood of the creaking Bench wore Arthur's arm to the point of irritation past discomfort. Arthur didn't care. He liked to hold him. The sun was far past set and the air had grown quiet. Arthur didn't stir or try to talk to him, he just held him. Arthur Measly didn't understand much about relationships and was hesitant to go through with the date in the first place; the whole concept seemed nebulous and frightened him greatly. But once he nestled his head on his shoulder, any doubts he may have had were gone. It was beautiful. Everything around Arthur coalesced into this beauty: there were no birds to disturb his company and all was left with the silence, complete and deafening; past the backlit amber clouds, the iridescent twinkle of the autumn sky reigned; the gentle fall breeze carried the polychromatic decay so tightly guarded by the slender trees; only moving when the flurry of air caught them, phantasms of a season past surrounded the pleasant dilapidation creating a polyvalent halo; at the center, the

Bench creaked and cawed but never in dissatisfaction; every so often that all too distinct sound of denim on denim would break the pleasant stillness, the tender brush and then an awkward glance. With every second, the universe cried because it would never create such a moment again. There are few moments in life that feel real, many of them are not like this.

While Arthur was free to move throughout his life, he couldn't choose when he could go to and how long he could stay there. As he rotated his small head towards him, he asked a simple question. Arthur wasn't really cognizant of what he was saying but enjoyed the sounds of the response. However, it was not him who returned his question. Arthur looked up to see himself in his Cubicle with his boss looking over the flimsy divider. He was shouting in a manner that made Arthur angry, extremely angry. So angry, in fact, that Arthur Measly wanted to stand up and scream, "I quit!" but Arthur only wanted to. Arthur did not do this. Any sane person like myself, or probably even you for that matter, would have stood up for ourselves against this constant abuse. Arthur Measly did not have enough of this spirit. Arthur sat down and resumed his overtime. His job was not difficult or even important, it was just a job. He had worked hard for his law degree, but he wouldn't have if he had known what kind of job it would land him. As Arthur resumed his clerkship, he looked down at his keyboard only to notice that it was replaced with a dull Pencil and worn Eraser.

As he looked for a sharpener, another eraser hit him on the back of his head as a boy yelled, "Sit down Four-Eyes" and he did as the voice told him to. There were chuckles in the room as Arthur was made fun of because of his new glasses. Arthur Measly was not a responsible person and he often lost or broke his glasses. With only his big sister's back-up glasses at his disposal, Arthur had to wear the iridescent "Hello-Kitty" glasses. His parents wanting to teach him a lesson in accountability, or some other useless virtue, made him wear

those horrible glasses for the rest of the school year. The bell rang and Arthur and his classmates were released upon the playground. There were a multitude of apparatus at their disposal and the mob of school children was evenly dispersed across the playground. Yet, Arthur did not follow the mob. Arthur liked to go towards the outskirts of the area and play in the sandpit, alone. He liked it this way. Arthur could make cool drawings, or a sandcastle or whatever he desired; all of this was on his own and unsupervised, his bullies knew this. They would usually kick sand in his face and call him names, Arthur could deal with this. Today was different. The group of kids pounced on Arthur Measly and held him down against the sand. The larger of the group grabbed a fistful of sand and made his way towards Arthur shouting, “If you like sand so much, why don’t you eat it?” and Arthur followed the command. The group laughed as Arthur ate the spoon-fed sand. Arthur Measly was a laughingstock, and he often was.

As he lifted his head from the sand, he saw a Keg in front of him. All his brothers were shouting at him to chug, chug, chug, chug, chug. Arthur Measly was grabbed by his ankles and held over the keg where, upside down, he began to chug, chug, chug, chug, chug. It was very dark. Arthur didn’t understand the hazing, but he went along with it. He felt sick but queued no one to that fact. Arthur needed to earn respect; if making himself sick would help him make friends, Arthur would kill himself for it. Arthur wasn’t accustomed to Alcohol and was even more foreign to its effects. He was released by his friends as they reveled in Arthur’s performance. He had done well. Arthur Measly had not often done well and liked the recognition. Most people told Arthur Measly that he wasn’t good enough—like there was a certain amount of good we all had to have—but this group told him that, in fact, he was good enough. Arthur liked that. In the eyes of his peers, Arthur had passed the test.

The test results were negative, she wasn't pregnant. It was not her fault; Arthur was the one who was infertile; he wasn't impotent, but he also wasn't enough. Arthur Measly could not have children. The clinical diagnosis of this fact did not hurt Arthur as much as his wife's apathy towards him. They had been happily married—unhappily—for almost thirteen years and in that time, Arthur only dissatisfied her. He did care for her, but she was not the love of his life, that was a long time ago. She was rich and her money helped Arthur through law school. Without her support there was no way that the esteemed Mr. Measly could attain his degree. She knew this and waited for her reimbursement. Arthur would never return the favor but, how could he? A relationship that was built on immense debt was doomed to fail from the start. Arthur Measly didn't understand that.

Before Arthur could question the busy physician, he was hit by another eraser. Arthur had a growing collection of spitballs, wads of paper, pens, pencils, highlighters, boogers, scabs, and his favorite: Erasers. He related better to things. Arthur would get rid of most of the things thrown at him—excluding the things he could use for his schoolwork—but the pile would become full the next day. All the hodgepodge would easily accumulate in the back of the class where Arthur sat. When the teacher's back was turned, many items were lobbed at him. Like his classmates, Arthur Measly wasn't paying attention to the lesson either, he was fiddling with his collection of Erasers. He liked picking them apart and piling up the shavings. Arthur was so invested with his surgical removal of the shavings that he had not heard the bell to recess or noticed that his teacher was staring at him. Arthur was told to clean up his mess. Always obedient, Arthur did as he was asked. He didn't mind the cleaning and found that it kept him away from those mean kids. As the class was about to start again, Arthur noticed a new face. He

smiled at Arthur as he sat down, and Arthur wanted to know his name. He would ask him after class.

The bell rang and Arthur leapt out of his seat and made a rush towards the door. As he stepped out into the hallway, he found himself in his boss's office. Before tomorrow, the boss would decide who to make his new partner in the firm and Arthur was in the running. Arthur was never considered for anything like that before. His wife had been pushing him to clinch this partnership, but he couldn't push it. He would tell her that he was schmoozing the executive, but he was only lying to himself, she knew that he didn't have the guts to get the partnership. The partnership was between him and one of his co-workers, Chadely Braun. Unlike Arthur, Chad was a hulking figure who had a commanding presence and a pleasant smile. He was never domineering but he would always seem to get his way. Much to Arthur's chagrin, his wife accepted an invitation from Chad for dinner, to celebrate each other's opportunity. He didn't like Chad or that his wife wanted to meet Chad, but he listened to his wife.

As Arthur stepped into his rundown Sedan, he looked over to ask his wife for directions but instead saw a man with a clipboard. The figure clicked his ballpoint pen and commanded him to depart from the DMV parking lot. Arthur was shaking, he didn't want to fail his test again. It wasn't because of his ability to drive, his ability to follow commands—he was quite good at the latter—or even his attention, it was because he was afraid. Arthur was never good with his fears, but his fear of failing was the worst, and it was cyclical; his fear of failing would cause him to fail which in turn made him fear failing. But this time was different, Arthur wouldn't fail again. Arthur Measly took every turn and made every lane change at the speed of a geriatric retiree but it didn't matter to Arthur because he passed. Arthur was elated and lecherously looked over the laminated affirmation of his success.

He ran through the doors of the DMV and found himself back in the hallway of his elementary school. And there was that boy. He was leaning shyly against the wall and looked at Arthur. He looked away. Arthur Measly walked right past and into his mother's SUV. He did not see that boy again until high school, but Arthur thought he was gone forever. Arthur never cried, not even when he broke his collarbone, but that night he spent sobbing into his pillow. It was all he could do. He began to scold himself but that was better than what he would later say to himself. Arthur would get the idea that he was too ugly or that he hated him in his head. Arthur Measly believed these two wretched things as he continued to cry into his Pillow. As he flayed himself and wallowed in self-loathing, his mother began to call him down for dinner. The last thing Arthur wanted to do was eat dinner, but he listened to his mother. He settled down, wiped his eyes and walked downstairs.

As he sat down at the dinner his wife asked if he wanted to look at the wine list. Chad said that the meal was on him and he knew the perfect Pinot Grigio to go with their delicate fish. Arthur knew nothing about fine wine and agreed with Chad. Arthur couldn't afford to eat like this often, so he relished the opportunity. His wife would make their budget and gave Arthur a small allowance to spend. This fancy dinner seemed to peak both Mr. Measly and Ms. Steinbeck's interest. I say Ms. Steinbeck because she never went by Mrs. Measly. It was something about either the name or its association with Arthur that made her gag at its use. Ms. Steinbeck and Mr. Braun got along quite well but Arthur didn't notice, he was too busy abusing Chad's offer. Glass after glass of white wine began to take hold of Arthur Measly and he soon needed a ride home. Chad offered to help more than Arthur would have liked but Arthur was none the wiser to Chad and Ms. Steinbeck's relationship.

Arthur was busy puking in his toilet when he looked up to see that he was now holding a trash can, still vomiting. He let go of the green bin but noticed he had got some of his ecstasy on his sweater and he only had the one. He stumbled his way towards his dorm room and fumbled with the key. Liquor had a very potent effect on Arthur, and he was a real lightweight. His roommate yelled at him and told him to go to bed or get out. Arthur thought about sleeping in the hall but decided on staying in bed. He threw that vomit coated sweater in the corner of the room and then collapsed on his bottom bunk. It was past the witching hour and his roommate had already fallen back into a deep sleep. Arthur couldn't seem to emulate that. His head was still pounding, and his world was still warping around him. Arthur pulled out his Laptop to watch something so he could fall asleep.

Laptop noiselessly pried, beaming the whitelight ajar on Arthur's nervous face. He shook in the dark room incessantly, his taught fingers typing ever so slowly. The restricted movements doubling clicking, double checking, double taking, to be double, triple, quadruple sure, extra safe. Behind fiery walls and battlements, the cheap VPN citadel was prepared for the imminent moral siege. This invasion, the occupation really, of Arthur's late night had been consuming him for some time, the thoughts inescapable. He breathed in one final gasp before submerging himself in the fray, the words were typed slowly. P. O. R. N—ENTER. Arthur's eyes raced as fast as his heart could measure. The beating intensity searching, G. A. Y—ENTER. The embankments gave way and the tide that had been welling up in Arthur for so long burst. Throbbing horror, Arthur in terror of his actions. Slamming the laptop, Arthur would look no more.

As he re-opened his Laptop, he began scanning the website for admissions decisions. He had been refreshing the page for over an hour and was frantic. Arthur Measly had been rejected

from most colleges but he still held out hope for one more good school. He wasn't the best student nor was he even close to being athletic, but Arthur sent in his grades and waited on the results. Somebody or something had to tell him yes. And then, the browser crashed. Due to all the traffic on the website, the server shut down and promptly rebooted, updating the status of all the applications. Arthur anxiously refreshed the page once more and looked for the update. At school, everyone was talking about all the great universities that they got into and there was a certain elitist gloating that hurt Arthur. He wasn't elite and he couldn't stand not having any acceptances. Arthur clicked the red box labeled "Admissions Decisions" and braced for the worst.

Somebody told him yes. That boy he liked told him yes. Arthur had never known such simultaneous joy and fear. The idea of a date scared him, but he really liked this boy. More importantly, he could see that he liked him. Unlike most of his male peers, Arthur spent hours on his appearance: where he should part his hair, which shirt looked the best with his nice slacks, where he should unbutton his shirt, which glasses looked the best. Arthur also washed his car. It wasn't much but he wanted to make sure that it was clean for his first high school date. When he was satisfied with his hair and his car, Arthur drove over to pick up his date. As he spent so long gussying up, he forgot about his fear. It returned as he opened his car door and walked over to the front door.

When Arthur opened the door, he found that his wife was leaving him. She had been seeing Chad Braun for months and wanted a "real man" or really anyone that wasn't named Arthur Measly. This was the second blow struck by Chad that day. Earlier he got the memo that he was passed up for promotion in favor of Chad. Ms. Steinbeck—later Mrs. Braun and a proud mother of three—yelled at her soon to be ex-husband and stormed out the door. There was

nothing of his that she wanted. He could keep that crappy apartment and the debt. He could keep the rundown Sedan and the subscription to National Geographic. He could keep everything but her. Arthur was soon left alone and grabbed a microwaved slice of Pizza.

As Arthur sat down with his lonely slice of Pizza, he noticed all the balloons strewn about him. Arthur Measly looked up to see a banner haphazardly hung that read “Happy Birthday” but there was no one else under it. The only other soul was his mother who was putting in the candles on his Birthday cake. She was frowning but Arthur was happy, he got to have cake. His mother was upset because Arthur hadn’t invited any of his 1st grade classmates. Arthur was too afraid to ask anyone and deliberately made sure that no one attended his party, he even asked his mother to make sure of it.

As he blew out the candles, Arthur saw his gift in front of him: a Smith & Wesson. He didn’t know what that meant but Arthur had been waiting long enough for his gun. All the background checks and delays had really slowed the process down. Now that he finally had a gun, he could finally relax. Arthur thought about writing a note for those that found him, but he wasn’t much of a writer and didn’t care enough to do so. He wasn’t entirely sure how the gun operated but all he needed was one shot. He loaded a nine-millimeter bullet into the magazine and fussed with getting the handgun ready. Arthur had never shot a gun before and could barely insert the magazine let alone chamber the round. At the moment, Arthur wasn’t thinking of much and pulled the trigger apathetically. Click. The round was not discharging into his skull, the weapon, instead, misfired. Arthur beat his gun on the table until he sent a round into his living room wall. His phone soon rang, and it was accompanied with a knocking on his door. Arthur, not wanting to fail a second time, more competently, loaded another round into the magazine, reloaded, chambered the round and then fired.

As his head jerked back, he saw him on the park Bench. He sat down next to him, as he always did. He looked up at him and he tried to find the words. Arthur was floundering but was happy. The boy touched his lips with his finger and told him to take it easy. He reclined and leaned his head on his. There was no one left in the park besides the souls on the park Bench. No matter where or when Arthur went, this moment was eternal. Regardless of how things turned out, this moment would still be eternal. They would always have the park Bench. Arthur looked out and wondered what his life had in store, what he would accomplish, what he would be remembered for but deep down, he knew no of that mattered; he would still have the park Bench, himself, him, and his freedom.