

The Cravin'

Rafeeq O. McGiveron

Once upon a Monday dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over a stack of student papers dashed off just the night before—
While I frowned, red pen uncapping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my office door—
"Tis some student late," I muttered, "tapping at my office door—
To turn in work and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was late in the semester;
And yet to no single paper had I given the grade of Four.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow
From such papers surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the absent Four—
For the rare and thoughtful paper to which I might give a Four—
Which I crave for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of papers as I shuffled 'em
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
"Tis some student good entreating entrance at my office door—
Thoughtful student now entreating entrance at my office door!—
I crave this and nothing more!"

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating there no longer,
"Oh," said I, "good student, your forgiveness I implore;
But I was grading papers mundane, when in beneficence you did deign—
Deign to bring your thoughtful paper, bring it to my office door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the door;—
Disappointment there and nothing more.

Deep into those bleary eyes peering, long I stood there, wondering, fearing,
Scarce believing it was one I'd hardly seen in class before;
Knowing he'd pulled an all-nighter, I knew his paper'd ne'er inspire
The grade I craved to stamp in fire, the exalted grade of Four.
This I whispered with a headshake bitter, just the words "A Four!"
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into my office turning, all my soul within me burning,
Suddenly I heard a yawning from this wretch whose grades were poor.
"Surely," said I, "surely sometime must you take delight in learning
Like the students who are yearning, those who read and crave for more,
Those who come to class and mysteries of humanities explore,
Those to whom thought's not a bore."

Now here though the open portal came that blank, uncaring mortal
Never cravin' thought or learning, grades of Two-Five, Threes, or Four.
Not the least obsequence made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, like haughty faculty, perched in the chair upon the floor—
By the pallid bust of Alice Cooper by my office door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this haggard face beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By uncaring, blank decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy face be blank," I said, "thou must have something in thy head,
Careless student kept awake because of No-Doz from the store;
Will thou strive for thought we're cravin', grades of Two-Five, Threes, or Four?"
Quoth the Student, "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fool to hear discourse so plainly,
For his answer little care—little interest in grades bore.
We cannot help agreeing that no college teacher living
Ever yet was cursed with Student sitting by his office door
Who cared so little about his learning as to say no more
Than the careless "Nevermore."

But the Student, sitting lonely by the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his academic goal he did outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered, though my heart felt like it fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered, "Students got good grades before.
When this fool leaves, I'll find some deserving Two-Five, Threes, and Four."
Said the Student, "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply distressing spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what he utters is his yearn to learn no more
Caught from some unhappy classes only thoughtful student passes;
Ill prepared and ill committed to his hard collegiate chore,
Now he thinks all students find their learning just a crying bore
To be cared for nevermore."

But the Student still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat next to the Student, bust, and door;
Then, upon cheap cushion sinking, I betook myself to thinking
That this least ambitious Student needed Two-Point and no more
When he transferred credits to a larger school whose years were four.
That's why he cared nevermore.

Thus I sat correctly guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fool who was awake because of No-Doz from the store,
Why he sat, his head reclining and all challenges declining,
Why he slouched there hopeless of the grades of Two-Five, Threes, and Four,
Caring nought that for those good grades he would always be passed o'er,
Simply caring nevermore.

Then, methought, the air grew denser; perhaps he was a right-wing censor
With the goal of trampling academic freedom to the floor.
"Wretch," I cried, "thou cannot fool me, for I see there is plan in thee,
Censor stopping thought creative with your example poor.
You hope to stop their cravin', the clever students' urge for Four."
Quoth the Student, "Nevermore."

"Profit, then, if business major, will compel you yet to labor
For good grades the rest are cravin', grades of Two-Five, Threes, and Four.
Though we know Two-Point will transfer, only good grades are the answer
To business schools whose MBA will earn you more and more.
Is there—is there some care in your head?—tell me—tell me, I implore!"
Quoth the Student, "Nevermore."

"Profit," said I, "will be little—flipping burgers on a griddle
Is the lot for those who crave not, those to whom thought is a bore.
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, before I turn your grade in,
You will make the effort like your thoughtful classmates I adore,
Those who read and crave to learn and find their learning not a bore."
Quoth the Student, "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, falling fool!" I shrieked, upstarting—
"Get thee back out of my door; make room for students who crave more!
Leave no paper as a token of the thoughtlessness you've spoken!
Leave my office hours open for those students who crave more!
Drop my class and take a blow-off!—take your form from out my door!"
Quoth the Student, "Nevermore."

And the Student, never quitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting
By the pallid bust of Alice Cooper by my office door;
And his eyes have all the scheming of a demon's that is dreaming,
Scheming how to pass my class without the thought he does abhor.
Unlike those who have the cravin', those who think and crave for more,
He will crave thought—nevermore!

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