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THE GRADUATION ISSUE

Chelmsford Public School Teacher Contract Negotiations

By Hetil Patel

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The Chelmsford teachers are part of the American Federation of Teachers, AFT. This is a union made for professional teachers and other various workers. Since the AFT is a national organization, it includes teachers from surrounding towns. The AFT is a branch of the association American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, AFL-CIO. This federation is helping the teachers fight for fair working conditions. Together with the Union they are protecting the rights and interests of public school employees.

The Chelmsford Public Schools employees have been working without a contract for one year as of June 30th. The contract is issued by the town of Chelmsford and the Chelmsford school board. The teacher's contract is a binding legal agreement that confers rights and benefits on both the teacher and the district. The contract states their salary, workday, school calendar, non-teaching duties, sick leave, personal leave, sabbatical leave and legal leave. The contract is one of the most important legal documents that for teachers. In 1978, a contract dispute occurred at Chelmsford High. The situation became so severe that the teachers voted to go on strike. That decision caused them to break ties with the National Education Association and Massachusetts Teachers Association and became affiliated with the AFT and the AFL-CIO.

The teachers have been trying to negotiate with the school board to issue a new contract, but there has been no success. The teachers have two representatives who represent all the teachers in front of the school committee and the superintendent. The negotiating board consists of various teachers from different schools throughout Chelmsford. The

teachers are not agreeing to the contract put forth by the Chelmsford School board due to possible language changes, salary and other confidential issues. The teachers are not asking for anything beyond what other town workers have received in recent contracts.

To make the community more aware of this on-going struggle, teachers have begun to take visible steps. The first step was that they chose to wear pins that say, "United We Stand". The pins will show the school board that they are all united. They also joined together to wear black to mourn the loss of their contract. The teachers have an impartial mediator who is helping the two parties settle on a contract. The third mediation date is June 22nd at 4pm.

For more information about the issues, you can view the June 6th School Committee Meeting on the Chelmsford Telemedia website; the meeting includes the views of some of Chelmsford Public School teachers on contract issues.

Update: From the June 22nd negotiating meeting, an agreement could not be reached. We will update you when more information is available.



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Musings from the Staff

As we say goodbye to our seniors, specifically our Co-Editors-in-Chief, Bethany Ward & Sahil Malhotra, we look ahead to the service of our new Editor-in-Chief, Fiona O’Hearne, and our Co-Presidents, Sonya Voloboi and Hetil Patel.

All three look forward to sharing with the Chelmsford High School community the news from around campus. We hope that you will join us in the fall for our “Back to School” issue, which will be available in digital and paper formats.

Please stop by our new meeting space, Room 234 in the Junior Wing on Wednesdays at 2pm, for our weekly meetings. We are always looking for new writers, editors, and artists to contribute.

Enjoy your summer!

Divorce (hell) by Anonymous

The divorce rate in the United States is 50% and, unfortunately, my parents are a part of that 50%. My parents got divorced right around when I was seven years old. Like most children with divorced parents, I remember the day very vividly when my parents sat me down and told me what was going to be one of the worst things I was ever going to hear; they told me that we were going to no longer be a normal family, that we were going to live at two houses instead of one. It’s hard now to remember what life was like living at one house, what it was like to not live out of a suitcase, or what it was like to not hear my parents fight every time they were on the phone with one another. I do have to say, I certainly have it easier than most kids of divorced parents because I, unlike many other kids, get to see both of my parents. People have lots of questions about what it’s like to be a child of divorced parents, questions about how my schedule works, how having divorced parents has affected me and my life, and what it has taught me overall.

My experience with having divorced parents wasn’t (and isn’t) easy, but I definitely don’t have it as hard as some people have it. I remember sometimes hearing my parents in the garage yelling at each other, but I never thought much about it. I also remember very well how my parents told us that they were no longer going to be married. They sat us down at our house in our living room and told us. At that time, I didn’t understand what it meant to have divorced parents; at that time, I thought it just meant we had a lot of money so we got two houses and one parent had to stay at each house so that nothing would happen to either house. Little did I know that was not at all what having divorced parents meant. After that, we moved out of the house my parents built and owned together. That, more than anything, upset me, because my whole childhood was in that house. All my childhood memories were in that house, and all my friends were in my neighborhood. Neither one of my parents could keep the house because it was too big and expensive to have one parent live there. Soon after we moved out, I finally realized that having divorced parents didn’t mean that we were rich and could afford two houses—it meant our family would no longer be one, it would always be two, and that we weren’t a normal family or, for that matter, even a family at all. After I learned the truth about what it meant to have divorced parents, my parents put me in therapy. I didn’t really need it. My parents just thought it would cover up their mistakes.

People often ask how my schedule works because schedules are different for every family of divorce. They’re based on how much custody each parent has over you. I’m very fortunate because both of my parents have 50 percent custody over my brother and me. This means I spend equal time with my two parents. I leave on a Friday to go

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ZULAWNIK, EMIL	University of Massachusetts, Lowell

It Only Gets Stranger From Here – Installment Four

By Fiona O’Hearne

If you answered “Why, yes Jamie, I would be very surprised if you fainted”, then good job! I would never faint if my boyfriend told me he was actually a fairy prince, I’m far too sensible.

Instead, I calmly flew into hysterics.

Calmly.

I clutch Luca’s hands tightly, crying out “Oh no! NO! This will drastically alter my perfectly normal life in irreparable ways! Oh no, no, no, no, NO!” I release his hands and throw myself against him. I bury my face in Luca’s t-shirt, the material soft against my skin. I feel him begin to hug me, but then decide against it.

“I-I’m so sorry Jamie. Never did I mean to spring this on you, I know that it is hard to process, and I understand if you’re mad at me or if you want to be left alone. If there is anything you have need of, I’ll tell you everything if you want, just...” his voice trails off. For once, Luca is unsure of what to say.

I gaze up into his face, and it’s like someone has punched me in the gut. I’ve never seen him look so vulnerable. And I just can’t do it. I can’t do this to him.

“Luca I am so sorry the truth is that I’ve known well more likes suspected for a long time that you were Fey or something and I’ve just kind of been mocking you which is really wrong even though you didn’t tell me that you were a fairy prince which is kind of important but that is not what I was trying to say what I mean is that I’m sorry.” I stand there, shame rolling over me in waves. I can’t look at him, but at the same time I can’t look away.

Luca blinks slowly, gazing curiously at me. His brow crinkles up like tissue paper. “Um, could you please repeat that, but at a slower speed?”

Right, most people have trouble understanding you when you speak at light speed. Forgot about that. “Luca, I’ve known for a while that that you were probably Fey.”

He gazes at me as if I just spoke Klingon. A word falls out of his slightly opened mouth, barely making it to me ears. “Quoi?”

I have officially, completely, and totally, befuddled my boyfriend.

“Luca, I...” A light bulb bursts into light above my head, and I grab it, hoping not to get burned again.

“Luca,” Ahh, how does past tense work again? Pronoun, then typically the conjugation of avoir or être, then the past participle? “j’ai sue pour une grand temps que tu es,¹” I scramble through the passages of my brain for the right words. “un prince feerique. Tu comprends?”¹ Forgive me, all French speaking people for butchering your language. Then and there I resolve to never space out in Havlin’s class ever again.

Luca slips his hand into mine, knitting our fingers together. I look up at him in surprise. His face is serious, strong again. “Je comprends.”¹

I shift uncomfortably, wiggling my toes in the plush teal carpet. “Est-tu bouleversé?”¹

“Suis-je bouleversé?” His voice is like a summer breeze, soft and sweet. “Jamie, si quelqu’un devrait être contrarié, c’est tu, n’est pas moi.”¹

That may be true, but it isn’t an answer. “Mais, est-tu bouleversé?”¹

Luca sighs, smiling at my stubbornness. He runs his free hand through his hair, a nervous habit. “Non, Je ne suis pas bouleversé. Je suis agaces un petit peu, mais je mérites ce.”¹

“Peut-être. Pourtant, je suis désolé.”¹ I squeeze his hand, and knit my fingers more tightly with his.

He steals my other hand, and we interlock our fingers. “Je suis désolé, aussi.”¹

We stand there, gazing at each other, emerald green into crystal blue. Then, something dawns on me.

“Wait a minute, were we speaking in French the whole time?”

Luca nod/shrugs fluidly in a uniquely French way (which is impossible for an American to replicate, and will only make you look like you are trying to hit yourself in the head with your shoulder, trust me on this). “Pretty much.”

I’m slightly incredulous. “And you understood me?”

“Perfectly. Your accent is rather impressive, ma chérie. Though you may want to brush up on your grammar and articles.”

I blush involuntarily, the curse of having pale skin. Luca notices, and a smile, the crooked kind that brings out his cavernous dimples, spreads across his face. Suddenly forming words becomes difficult.

“So, um, I know that I said that I thought that you were Fey, but I really don’t know exactly what that means or how your society works or such, so, um, could you tell me about that, please?” Smooth Jamie, real smooth.

Luca seems to either not have noticed my fine handling of the English language, or finds my awkwardness endearing. “Yes, of course I can. I forgot that all of this is new to you. Why don’t we sit down, as there is a good deal to tell?”

I nod my head in agreement. “Sounds good to me. Chairs, floor, bed, window seat, or reading nook?” The ability to speak properly is slowly returning to me.

“There are so many options. But I think bed.”

A smile pulls at the corners of my mouth. “You just like playing with the canopy.”

He shrugs, smiling back at me. “Perhaps.”

I release one of his hands, but refuse to return the other. We walk over to my bed, and without unlocking our fingers, climb onto the end and sit cross legged across from each other, our knees touching. We’ve had years of practice of doing things one handed. Luca and I can even do our homework one handed, since we’re both ambidextrous, though Luca prefers to use his left hand.

Luca runs his free hand through his hair “I don’t exactly know where I should begin. I have never told anyone these sort of things before.”

“Well, what does it mean to be a fairy prince? How does that fit into your society’s hierarchal structure?” Yes! My word powers have been fully restored. I mentally high five myself for the use of the phrase “hierarchal structure” in casual conversation.

“Hm. That’s a good question.” He looks down at the patchwork quilt beneath us, studying it as if it will give him the words he needs. After a second or two of pondering, he looks back up at me. “The structure is a bit complex. Think of the basic social pyramid, with the upper, middle, and lower class.” I visualize an Egyptian pyramid, cut into three equal parts. “All three classes can be divided into smaller groups. In the upper class are the royals and their Courts, then in between the upper and middle are the lesser nobles. The middle class Fey are the faerie equivalent of the ordinary, everyday folks. Lower class Fey generally possess weak magic or aren’t very intelligent, sometimes both. That’s probably the best way to think of it, though it isn’t totally accurate. Faerie social structure isn’t very rigid compared to that of humans. Our society is more based upon a combination of class and race. Fey fit into different sections based partially upon race, along with other factors.”

I see the pyramid before my eyes, three large sections with many smaller sections within. I try to combine it with a diagram of fairy races. “That is a bit complex.”

“The social structure is actually even more complicated, but that’s all you need to know for now.” He pushes a strand of blond hair out of his eyes, and shifts, sitting up a little straighter. “So, you wanted to know where I fit in all of that, yes?”

I nod my head. “Yes.”

“Alright, you remember how I said that the upper class was made up of the royals and their Courts?”

I begin to nod my head again, but something stops me. “Wait, Courts plural?”

“I knew you’d notice that. Yes, there are Courts plural. There are two main “Courts”, or alignments, which are divided up into 4 seasonal Courts, each with their own rulers.”

My head is beginning to feel a bit jumbled, like it has been used as the ball in a rugby match. “Your people seem to enjoy dividing things.”

I earn a smile from Luca, and he continues talking. “The two main alignments are the Seelie and Unseelie alignments, more commonly referred to as Courts.”

Something popped into my head then. “I’ve heard of those! Isn’t the Seelie Court supposed to be good, and the Unseelie Court is evil?”

“Well, that’s an over simplification, but basically yes. Fey aligned with the Seelie Court are usually benign, sometimes kind, to humans. They can be mischievous, but don’t usually harm humans. The Unseelie Court is a bit problematic.”

My brows pull down a bit, scrunching ever so slightly. “Why is that?”

“Well, they range from pure evil to questionable. In general, don’t trust Fey in the Unseelie Court. The royals are the most trustworthy, but that isn’t saying much.”

“Don’t trust the Unseelie Court, got it.” I think I’m beginning to get a headache.

“Okay, so then there are four seasonal Courts. The Summer, Fall, Winter, and Spring Courts. Each has its own king, queen, princes, princesses, and such, along with nobles and Fey. The Summer and Spring Courts make up the Seelie Court, while the Winter and Fall Courts make up the Unseelie Court.”

“So, do the Summer and Spring Courts and the Winter and Fall Courts share equal power?” I never realized how complicated society, and government in general could be until this moment. How does Luca keep this all straight?

Something flashes in Luca’s eyes, but it quickly disappears. “No, the Summer Court is slightly more powerful than the Spring Court, and the Winter Court is slightly more powerful than the Fall Court. But that’s all I plan to tell you about government and social hierarchy and alignments for now, because it is incredibly complex and tedious.”

I let out a sigh of relief. “Oh, thank you, I thought my head might explode.” I finally relinquish Luca’s hand, and slide off the bed. I stretch my stiff arms and legs, but stop abruptly. “Wait, I still don’t know what the creepy dream I had has to do with any of this.”

Luca slips off the bed, coming to stand next to me. “Ah yes, the dream. To put it simply, one of the princes of the Winter Court invaded your dream, and ordered you to go with me to the Autumnal Equinox Ball.”

How can my life be this weird? “He invaded my dream?! How?”

Luca shrugs. “It’s a unique ability, passed down through the Winter Court. It’s rather rare actually.”

I shove a lock of hair behind my ear with a bit more force than may be necessary. “Am I correct in assuming that the Autumnal Equinox Ball occurs on the night of the fall equinox?”

“Yes, September 22nd, the fall equinox. The Ball is an immensely important gathering of the upper class of all four Courts.”

“And I, a human teenager, am supposed to escort a prince of the Spring Court to said ball?” Please say no, please say no.

He nods. “Precisely.”

I stare at him, the impossibility of it all crushing me. “How?”

“Luckily, we have the entire summer to figure that out.”

I warned you, didn’t I?

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to one of my parents’ houses, and then leave to go to my other parent house the next Friday, so I spend a full week and weekend with each parent. I’ve gotten used to going back and forth; it doesn’t really bother me that much because I’m just so used to it. I’ve never really known what it’s like not to go back and forth. Something a lot of people ask me is if I have clothes at both houses, and the truth is that I live out of my suitcase. I have this suitcase that I take back and forth to my parents’ houses that contains all my clothes that I always wear. I don’t think I’ve honestly ever unpacked my suitcase. Probably the hardest thing about my experience is the fact that I’ve never felt settled; I feel like I’m always moving and I’m constantly packing. Before my brother could drive I would have to take the bus home and I’d have to bring the stuff that I needed that could fit in my backpack until my dad or mom could drive me to my other parent’s house to get my suitcase and other things. But now my brother can drive, so on Fridays we just put our bags in his car and it’s a lot less stressful. People always say, “Well, don’t you miss your other parent while you’re gone for so long?” and what I say to them is, “Of course I miss my other parent. Who wouldn’t?” But a full week and weekend to me feels like a short amount of time to be

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away from a parent just because it's become so normal not to see one of my parents for that amount of time.

But it's not like I never talk to my parent when I'm at the other parent's house; I call and text them almost every day. The one thing that aggravates me is when people get upset about not seeing their mom or dad for one day because I don't get to see my parents for a whole week.

Having divorced parents has definitely had an effect on me. It's not always the easiest thing to go from living in a house with your mom, dad, and brother, to going back and forth between two houses. Any person that goes through something like divorce understands that it's not something that you can just get over. It's something that you always think about, and the experience will always live with you. One thing I've learned is I am very grateful for my parents' sacrifices. Most kids with non-divorced parents don't always understand how much their parents *actually* do for them. When you are in the situation of having divorced parents, there's only one of them and they not only have to provide for you, but also themselves; if you have other siblings, they need to be provided for as well. It makes you realize how many sacrifices your parents make for you.

It has personally affected me in a way that I feel like I'm constantly around fighting. When someone starts fighting it makes me feel really anxious because it always gives me flashbacks to when I was younger and my parents would go in the garage to fight so my brother and I wouldn't have to hear, but we did. I also suffer from getting flashbacks all the time from when my parents weren't divorced. The flashbacks can be happy things or even sad things. I get them very often, but I just don't tell anyone. Sometimes I'll just be walking down the hall, or I'll be hanging out with friends, and I'll get a flashback. I try to control these flashbacks, but they don't just go away on demand, and they can be really bothersome. Flashbacks are something that lots of kids of divorce experience, and it's something that people don't realize comes with divorce.

I wish that getting a divorce or having divorced parents wasn't a thing. I wish people didn't have to go through it. I will always wish my parents never split up, but the reality is that I will never be able to change that. In a way, parents splitting up can be a good thing and a bad thing. I've already mentioned why I don't like having divorced parents. The reason why having divorced parents may be a good thing is because you don't have to hear your parents argue anymore. This can be true for some people, but sometimes even after your parents split up they still fight and argue, but it's not as bad because they don't live under the same roof anymore.

Because I've gone through having divorced parents, I have always promised myself that I will never make my children go through the same thing I went through because I know how much it has affected me and I would never want my children to go through the same thing. I also hope that the percentage of divorced parents goes down in the next few years because I don't think anyone at all should have to go through divorce. For some people, divorce can be good; for example, there may be an abusive parent or a parent that isn't a good influence, so sometimes divorce isn't always the worst option.

I can't change that my parents are not together anymore. Some people are very lucky and will never have to experience what it's like to live at two houses, and they should be very grateful, but some people don't understand what it's like to go through this transition. However, everyone's experience is different with divorced parents. I definitely think I have it a lot better than some people, but no matter what, it's not something that's easy to go through. My experience has really only started. I still have a lot more to learn about having divorced parents and how it will affect me when I'm older. I definitely think people do take for granted having both parents under one roof. My whole life I've only known having two of everything, and that's something that not a lot of people understand. Life isn't always easy, but I think that in life everything happens for a reason and my parents splitting up definitely happened for a reason. What that reason is I'm not quite sure yet. I'm not sure if I'll ever find out, but for now I'll just keep living life with a smile on my face.