

I Fall Asleep & Dream of Cows in June

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Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 2.5



I am in prison. I live in a jail cell in Cowansville prison. My cell is ten feet long and seven feet wide. The floor is made of tile and the walls are made of concrete. I am in cell number 11-2B-12.

These are the things in my jail cell:

A desk,
A TV,
A computer—I am writing this story on my computer right
now!

A radio, and a walkman, too.
A fan, for hot summer days,
A bed,
A locker for my clothes,
Some shelves for my books and shoes,
A toilet,
A trash can,
A sink,
A neon light,
...and not much else.

I have a window. The window has metal bars over it. I can see a small courtyard through my window. There are bright lights, other buildings, some grass, a small garden, and not much else.

And on one wall of my cell I have a bulletin board. On my bulletin board I hang some pictures, some postcards, and a calendar.

My calendar is a gift from Martha. I like Martha. Martha comes to the jail and is nice to prisoners like me. She teaches prisoners how to read

and how to do math. As I write this it is the month of May. I used to like the calendar.

Until this month. Before, each month there were pigs and fields and trees and buildings and cows on my calendar. Martha loves cows. I like cows too. Cows are friendly. Nothing bothers a cow. Cows are cool. And they give milk.

But this month, May, someone is staring at me from my wall. I call him Mister May, or Mister Martha. Martha says this is her husband. Mister Martha has two big dogs with him.

Mister Martha is a farmer. He looks more like a farmer than anyone else I have ever seen. He wears blue overalls, dark glasses, a blue shirt, and a blue farmer's hat. He is sitting on a porch with his two dogs. I have never met Mister Martha. But I'm not sure if Mister Martha likes me.

One day I show my calendar to a friend. "What do you think?" I ask my friend. "Look at the farmer. Is he smiling or frowning?"

"I can't tell," my friend says to me.

"And look," I say to my friend. "Anywhere you go in the cell, it looks like Mister Martha is staring at you through his dark glasses. You can't escape."

"Are the dogs staring at us too?" My friend asks me.

I move to the left. I move to the right. "You're right!" I say. "the dogs are staring at me too! Just like the Mona Lisa. And I can't tell if they are smiling or frowning either!"

"What's the Mona Lisa?" my friend asks me.

"The Mona Lisa is a very old painting. It was painted 500 years ago. A famous artist named Leonardo painted it in Italy. It is a painting of a lady named Mona Lisa. It is the most famous painting in the world. It is now in France."

"But why are Mister Martha and his dogs like the Mona Lisa?" my friend asks me.. "Mister Martha is not 500 years old, he is not a lady, and this picture of him is not a painting."

"Because," I explain, "nobody can tell if the Mona Lisa is smiling or not. And her eyes follow you everywhere you go. Just like Mister Martha the farmer and his dogs. The Mona Lisa is creepy, too."

My friend asks me, “are there other paintings by Leonardo? Is there a Mona Martha? A Mona Agnes? A Mona Floyd?”

“No,” I tell him, there are other paintings by Leonardo but no Mona Martha, Mona Agnes or Mona Floyd. And besides, I could not imagine a Mona Martha, because Martha always smiles. Unless you mess with her cows. Now what if I cover my calendar? Then they couldn’t stare at me.”

My friend leaves. He is laughing at me. I am not laughing. I go to sleep in my cell.

At 2 a.m. I wake up. I look up. Mister Martha is still looking at me. It is creepy. I cannot escape. I wonder, are the dogs going to attack me if they meet me one day? They look hungry, and they are big dogs. They look like Saint Bernard dogs, the type that rescue stranded hikers on mountains in the winter. The heaviest dogs in the world. They must eat a whole lot, I think to myself.

**I dive under the covers and go back to sleep.
At 4 a.m. I wake up again. I move left, I move right. Mister Martha is still there. I cannot go to sleep.**

I have an idea!

I pull Mister Martha off the calendar. I pretend it is June. The June calendar picture has 7 cows on it. I like cows. Cows never attack people. No cow ever ate a person. Cows just stand around in a field and eat grass and hay all day. I cannot tell if these cows are smiling or not, or if they are thinking about me. But I don’t care.

I fall asleep and dream of cows in June.