

The Voices

by Will, eighth grade writer

Will's interpretation of who the original poem's *they/them* are: Voices in Reuben's head

December 17, 1842

Why, oh why is this happening? I pray for a miracle to be preformed before me. May my wife be kept safe and warm through the night. Why must I—We—do this? The voices of the past lives are echoing in my head, "Do it, do it, kill your maiden!"



These voices will not stop! Their craving for blood and pain used to cease at the slaughter house, but now being there does not even phase them. Their love for the massacre is rocketing to a whole new level of pain. I pleaded to God that I may be healed many times before, but my prayers seemed as though they were denied.

December 18, 1842

I can barely stand—let alone write. It feels as though a wooden stake has been driven in straight through my heart, mind, and soul. I.....

I loved it! The rush, the excitement! Those eerie voices in my head are taking over!

Ah...hahaha! The kill was swift, but sloppy. I killed her while she slept and dragged her limp body out to the butcher shop and dismantled her bit by bit. I then hung her body's remains with all of the other meat that was hanging.

And tomorrow morning as the sun is rising; I will be selling her meat for a very cheap price. Just to get her bloody body out and about to town. The evidence will be scattered.

Everything is going as planned.

December 19, 1842

That wasn't—couldn't—have been me writing that disgusting and horrid journal entry last night.

Still.... My love—my life—is gone. I don't have much time left myself. So I will tell you the reason for all of my actions. I killed my wife.... Then I tore down the slaughterhouse just to dispose of all possible evidence.

Now I have stripped myself down to a chair and soon I will set this rotten house to fire, but before I do.....

I'm back! What the devil has this fool done?! No, no, no!

Wicked Soul

by Rachel, eighth grade writer

Rachel's interpretation of who the original poem's *they/them* are: Ghosts from the past



Dear Diary,

I am bewildered. I couldn't have ever imagined those words hovering over my mind. They had the plan all ready for me. I stood with them, and I scanned the paper, line for line. Shaking with grief and fright, I told them it shall be done. The women cried, and I did not know why. I, myself, couldn't see through my tears of shame. She must die, they this said over and over. After our romantic dinner, I told her to come with me. The blade shone bright with the moonlight. Then, as silent as a robber, as clean as a diner floor, it slashed through her. For then, she was dead and gone. She lay there in her old gown with limp arms where I had placed her on the floor.

Dear Diary,

It looks so empty. The bed is still unmade. How could I have done it? They drove me to this and now I shake with grief. The sexton's and singers' voices ring in my ear as I look at the death house. They still chant and order me. How cruel can someone be! They must not have known how sad I felt. Her shadows left gray dust around the bed. I never knew it was so big. My sadness turned into rage. I had madness in me. I can't control it. The insanity is taking over me. It wasn't my fault. The blade hung there. It was its fault. I must do something about that...

Dear Diary,

That nutty run-down house deserved it. Its smell lingered with them and her. Oh, how her sweet aura left a trace of sanity in the house. I did love her, yes, I did. But they haunted me and whispered that she must die. Pieces of them hung on hooks, just above the killing object. I've done what they had asked. My only beloved has died. Burned down the house, along with the ruins of her and them, I must. Now, peaceful I shall be. Still, the screams echo in my head. Laughing with great joy, the ashes are blown away.

Aberration

by Jordan, eighth grade writer

Jordan's interpretation of who the original poem's *they/them* are: Reuben's other personalities



January 31, 1929

He started nattering to me again. Then his voice became deep, and his tone was exceedingly solemn. He told me that my wife must die, but he wouldn't note why. I declined and then he threatened to take over my body again and eradicate her himself.

I must stop him, but how? I will have to write it out; it's the only way he can't interfere.

I could go to the hospital. That way, I could get the help I need. Wait! No, I can't go there. They'll just send me to the loony bin. That would be a mistake. There must be an alternative.

Maybe I should just tell her, and tell her to run for the hills. Yes, do that. Ah no, he'll just stop me and kill her then. Maybe I can run for it. Gah! He'll only drive me back. What am I to do? This is so maddening! How can I save my beloved wife? I love her so greatly, but... I don't know what to do. How can I save her when my shadow won't leave me alone? I don't want to let it happen again.

February 1, 1929

He did it. I woke up this morning and Judy was gently staring at me with her striking jade eyes. The color softened my heart. I kindly tucked her hair behind her ear, and blood had flowed out of it. She wouldn't wake up. Her heart lacked a beat. Why did this happen? I loved her! Why can't I love? Why doesn't he let me love?

I have to get rid of him before he kills *anyone* ever again. The slaughterhouse! That's how I have to get rid of him. I think that's where he first started talking to me... He said that's where he's from, where his genesis was. I'll have to get rid of it.

February 2, 1929

I tore down the slaughterhouse and then burned the scraps. *It* hasn't talked to me or done anything. I think it's gone. It's only one day, however; it could still be here, just not.... visible.

It doesn't matter anyways; I am soon going to depart. My grave has been dug. My past six wives were singing and digging ten meters away from me next to where they are buried. They sang beautifully, I might add, and dug my grave to my favorite tunes. It was soft and delicate.

I cut down to the Cedar tree, too. My first wife planted as a symbol of home, security, and affection. That's what she said.

I told Judy that I wanted to be buried with her chest, but she didn't hear me. So I put it in the grave myself.

I know I am going to pay the sexton with my life. I was always scared of death, but now I'm embracing it. I am not running, nor am I frightened. I realized that the end of my life means no one else's life will end because of me.

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