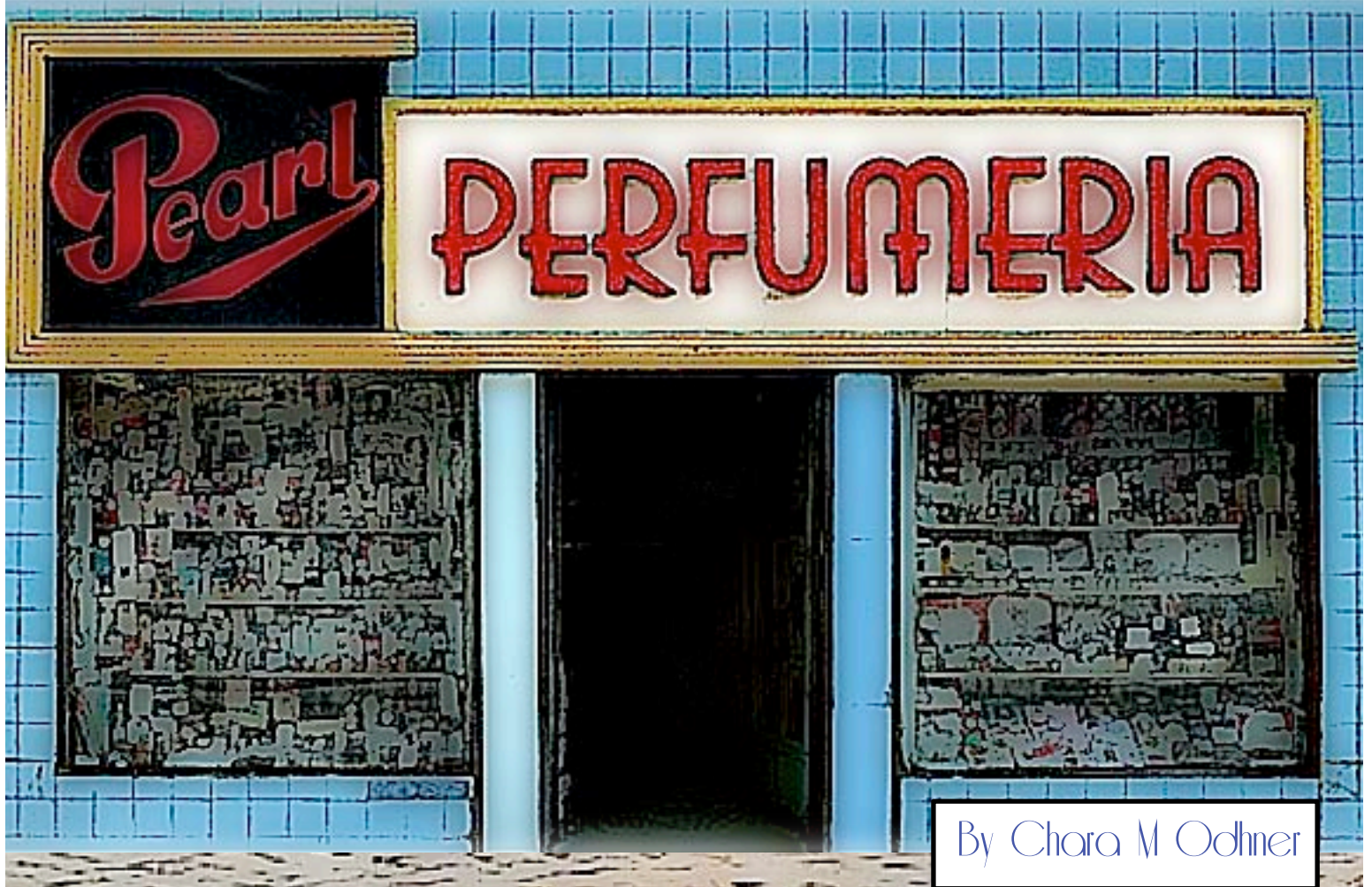




The Perfumer



By Chara M Oohner

10:23 AM

HELEN ARRIVES AT
MR. ENOSH PEARL'S
PERFUMERIA IN THE
JEWISH QUARTER.

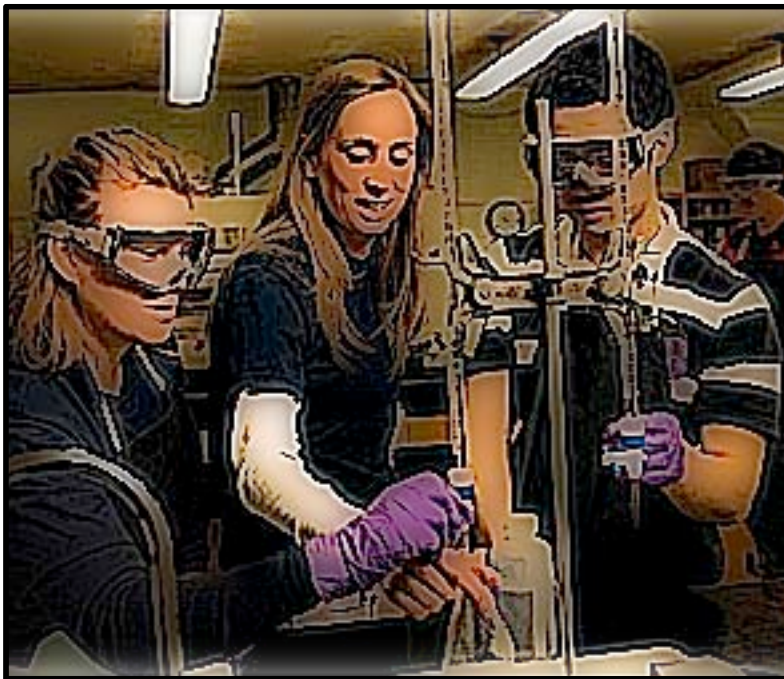


SHE EXAMINES THE
BOTTLES IN THE
WINDOW BEFORE
VENTURING INSIDE.
MR. PEARL IS WELL
KNOWN FOR HIS
SCENTS. HIS
SCENTS ARE ONLY
SOLD HERE, ONLY
SOLD BY MR. PEARL
HIMSELF. AND THEY
ARE UNPARALLELED,
UNIQUE, AND
UNFORGETTABLE



MR. PEARL IS NO
ORDINARY PERFUMER.

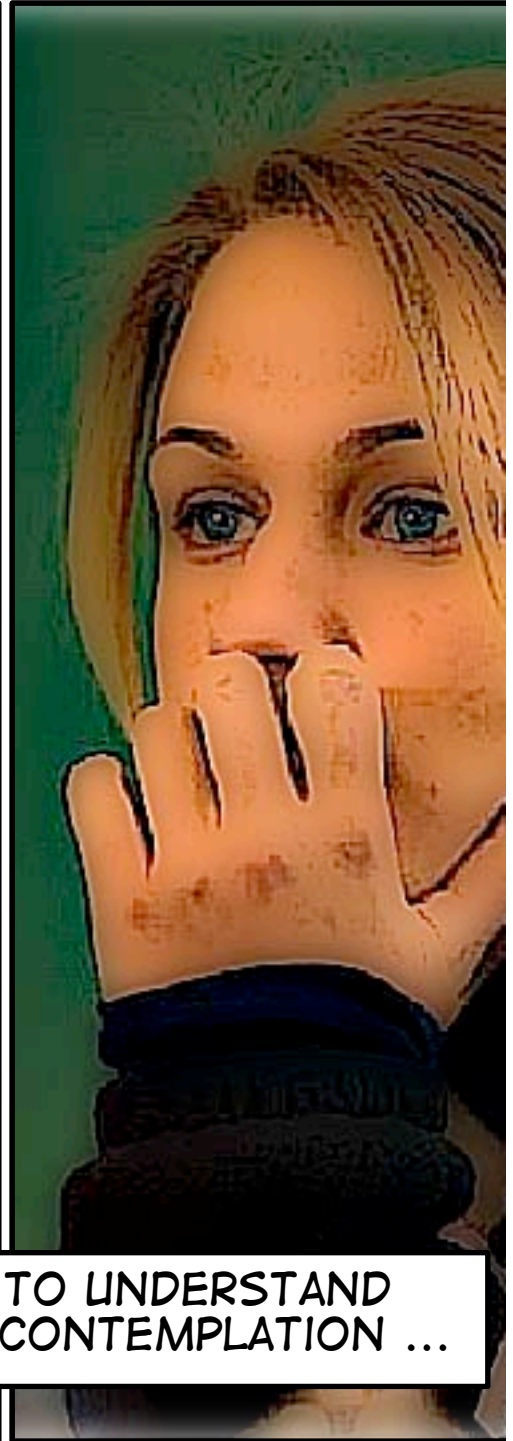
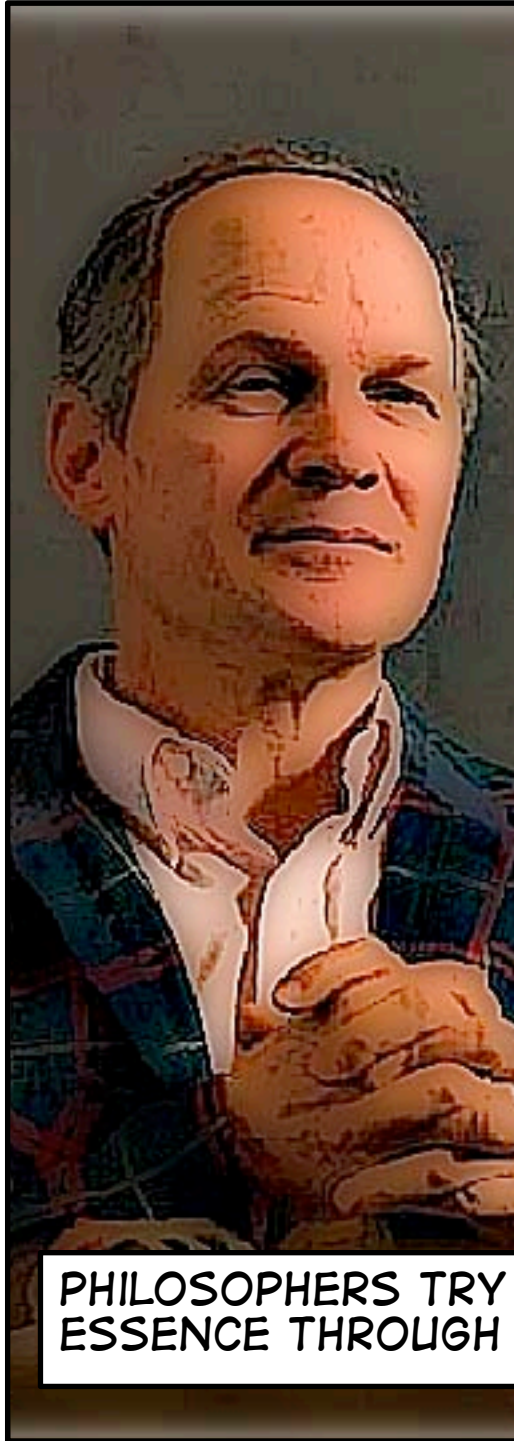
ORDINARY PERFUMERS ARE
SIMPLY *artistic* CHEMISTS,
COMBINING ELEMENTS
CREATIVELY TO PRODUCE
SPECIFIC PLEASING ODORS.



MR. PEARL BOTTLES ESSENCE.

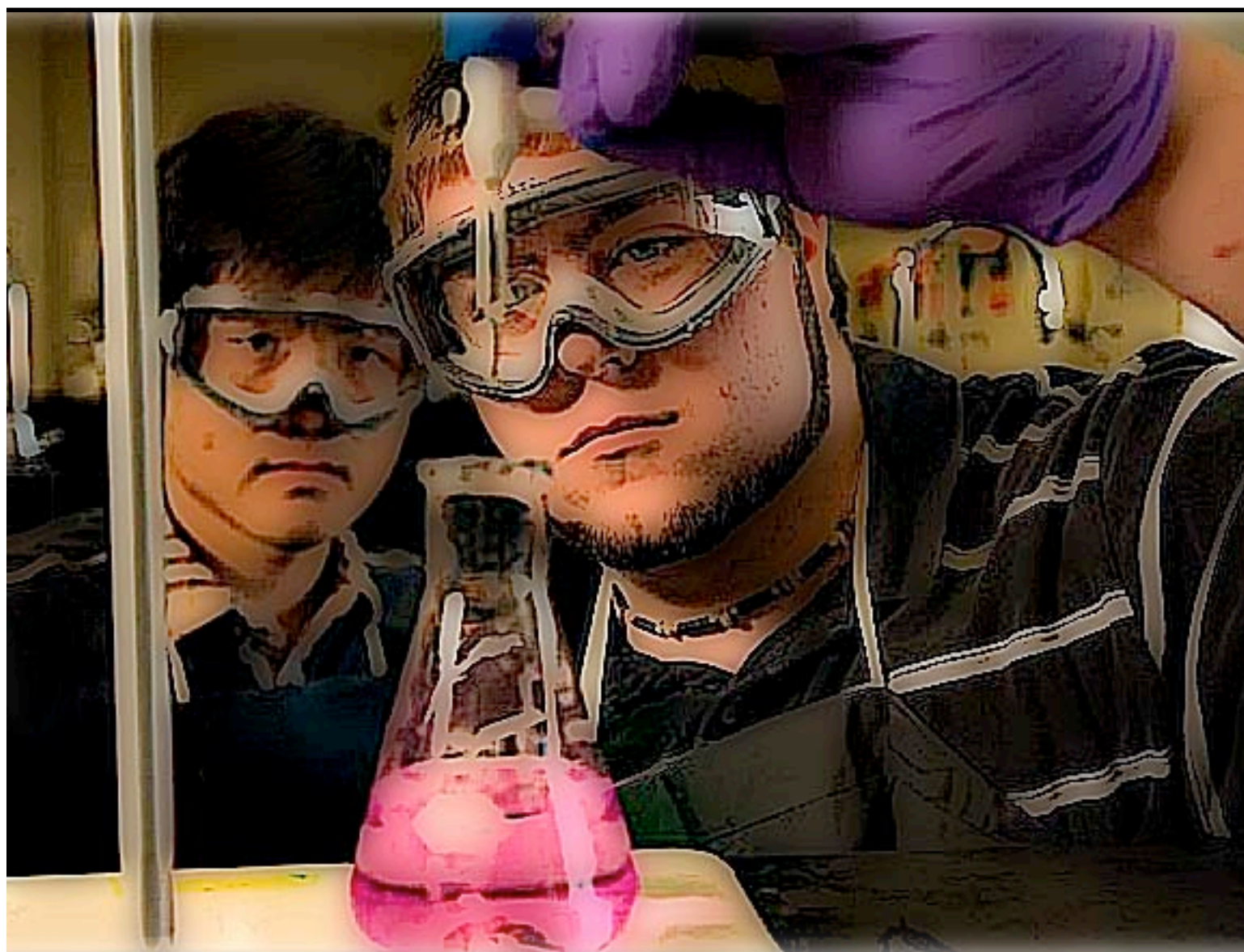


THE HUMAN CONDITION DICTATES THE NECESSITY
OF THE SEARCH FOR THE ESSENTIAL.



PHILOSOPHERS TRY TO UNDERSTAND
ESSENCE THROUGH CONTEMPLATION ...

... SCIENTISTS USE EXPERIMENTATION ...





... ARTISTS ATTEMPT TO CREATE IT FROM RAW IMAGINATION ...



... LOVERS FIND ESSENCE IN COMPANIONSHIP ...



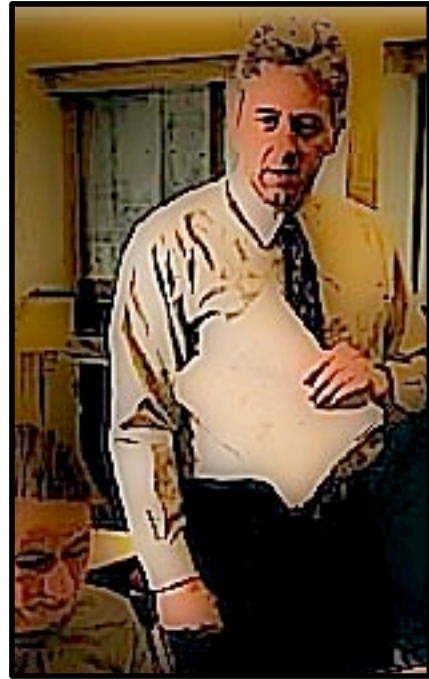
... AND
MEANWHILE,
UNKNOWN TO THE
WORLD AT LARGE,
MR. ENOSH PEARL
HAS CAPTURED
PURE ESSENCE IN
LIQUID FORM AND
HE SELLS IT IN
HIS SHOP IN THE
JEWISH QUARTER.



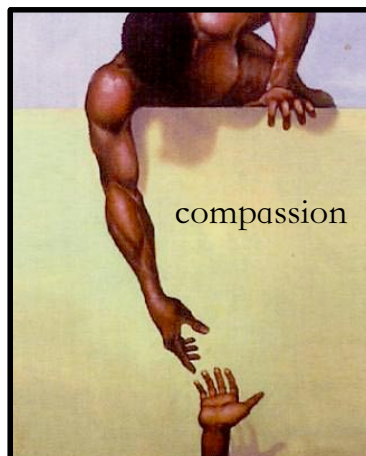
MR PEARL HAS BEEN BOTTLING ESSENCE FOR DECADES.

HE HAS NO ASSISTANT.

HE SELLS EVERY BOTTLE OF
SCENT HIMSELF, FOR THE
PROCESS, "DIAGNOSIS," IS NO
SIMPLE MATTER. NO ONE WANTS
TO END UP WITH AN ESSENCE
THAT IS NOT THEIR OWN.



WHEN HELEN INQUIRES ABOUT A SCENT, MR. PEARL
PRESENTS HER WITH SEVEN BOTTLES.





UNCORKING A
SLENDER BOTTLE,
MR PEARL WAVES
THE FRAGRANCE
BENEATH HELEN'S
CHIN. SHE BREATHES
IN DEEPLY, SLOWLY,
SATISFIED; TEARS
SPILL DOWN HER
CHEEKS.

SHE WAGS HER HEAD
BACK AND FORTH.

NO.



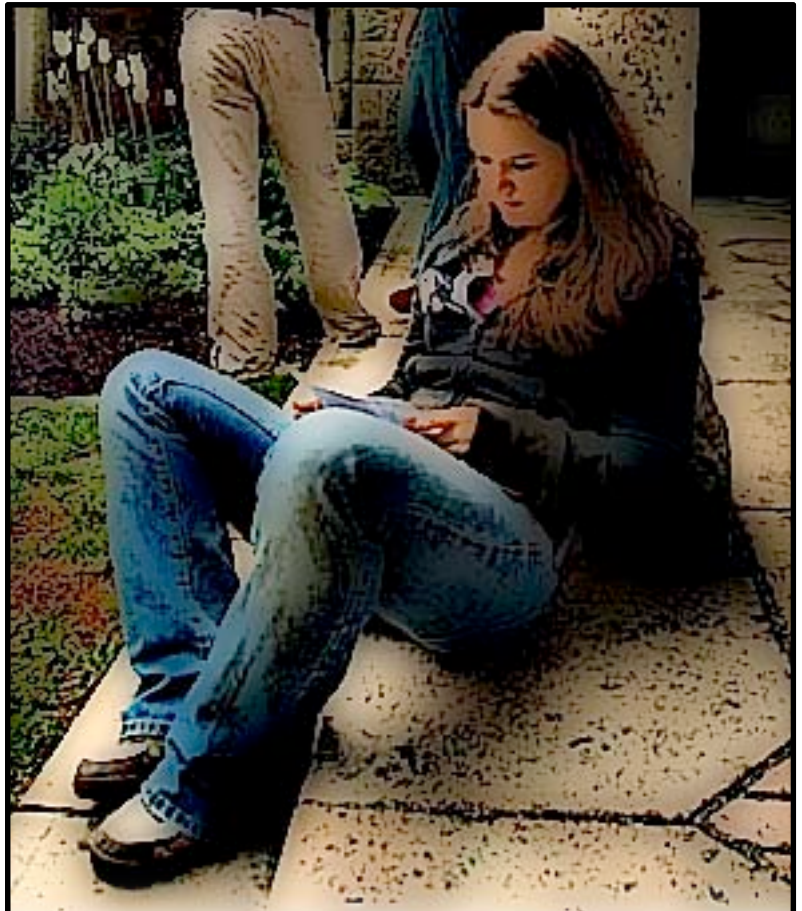
HELEN GRIPS THE
COUNTER EDGE
WHEN THE
FRAGRANCE
TOUCHES HER
NOSTRILS. HER
CHEST PUFFS UP
AND SHE HOLDS HER
HEAD A BIT HIGHER.

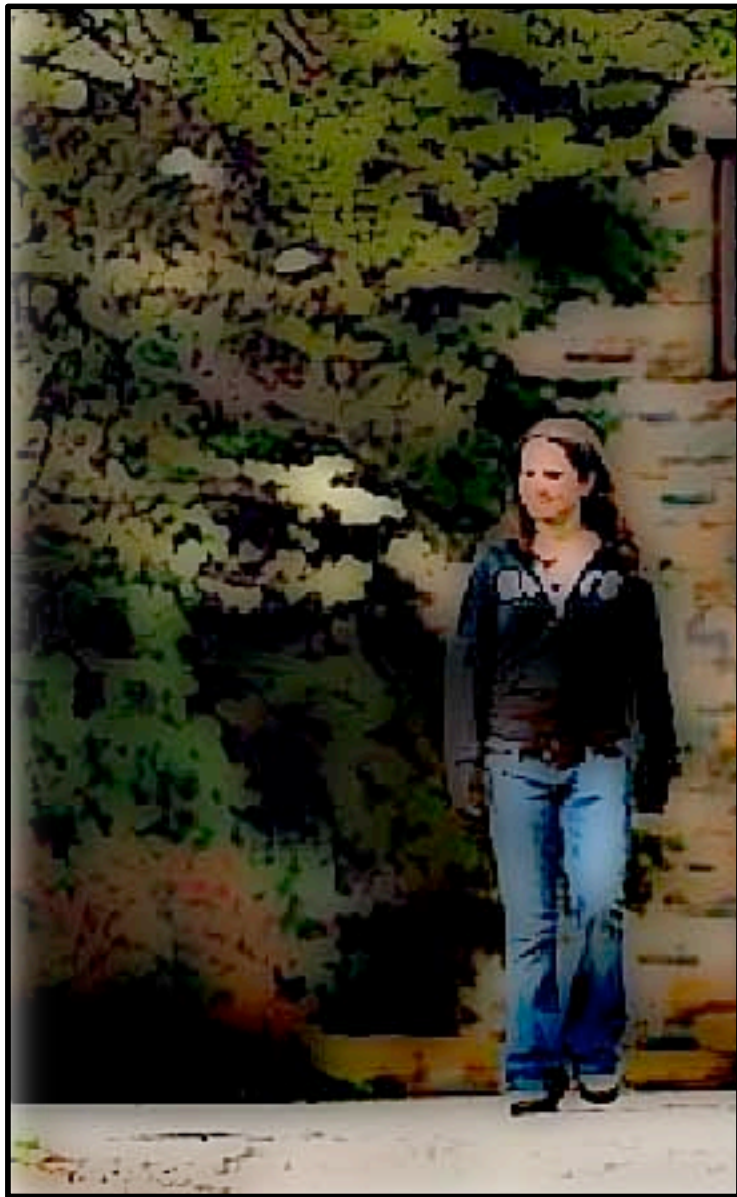
SHE FILLS HER
LUNGS AND, TAKING
A STEP BACKWARDS
SAYS PLAINLY, "NOT
QUITE."



THE SCENT OF REASON REMINDS HELEN
OF SOMETHING DISTANT BUT FAMILIAR.
THE FRAGRANCE IS SUBTLE, WITH
UNDERTONES OF OLD BOOKS AND
JASMINE.

"THIS ONE IS TOO CLEAR."





TO HER DISMAY, JOY LEAVES HELEN FEELING EMPTY.

LIKE A ZEPHYR THE SCENT PASSES HER BY NOT UNPLEASANTLY,
BUT OFFERS NOT ENOUGH CONSOLATION IN THE AFTERMATH.



joy

WHEN MR PEARL OFFERS A SQUAT LITTLE BOTTLE WITH A LONG NECK FILLED WITH A GREY TINTED FLUID, HELEN DOESN'T SMELL ANYTHING.

SHE LOOKS UP AT MR PEARL CONFUSEDLY, TAKES ANOTHER DEEP BREATH. STILL NOTHING.

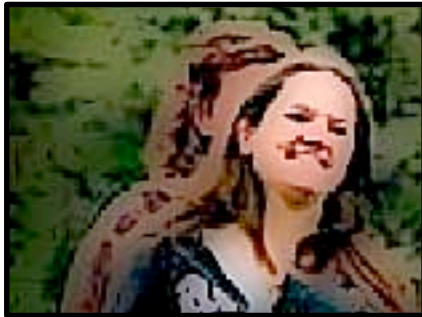
MR PEARL, RE-CORKING THE BOTTLE, SAYS, "NOT AS UNCOMMON AS YOU MAY THINK, ACTUALLY."



honesty



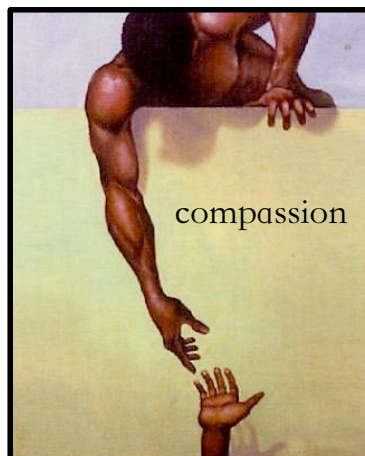
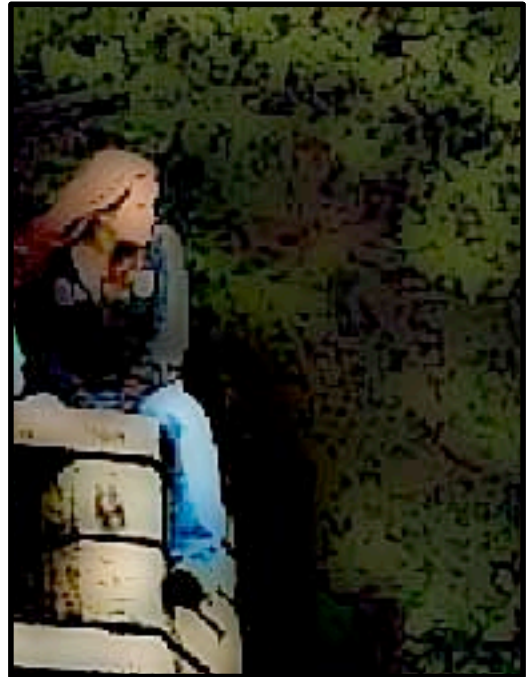
HUMOR STRIKES
HELEN SHARPLY. IT
KNOCKS HER FLAT;
SHE LANDS ON HER
FIRM, CUSHIONED
BEHIND. SHE
GIGGLES WHEN SHE
LANDS, UNINJURED,
IMAGINING THAT
THE FALL WAS OF
HER OWN DOING.
MR PEARL
SHUFFLES QUICKLY
AROUND THE
COUNTER TO OFFER
HER A HAND UP.



"PERHAPS NOT."

WHEN COMPASSION
TOUCHES HELEN
SHE FEELS WARMTH
SPREAD OUTWARD.

SHE BRIEFLY VISITS
THE SOULS OF EACH
OF HER LOVED
ONES, THEN AFTER
LONG MOMENTS
WITH CLOSED EYES,
SHE PASSES THE
BOTTLE BACK TO
MR. PEARL.



10:54 AM

HELEN LEAVES MR.
ENOSH PEARL'S
PERFUMERIA IN THE
JEWISH QUARTER,
ONE SMALL BOTTLE
OF COMPASSION IN
HAND.



10:55 AM

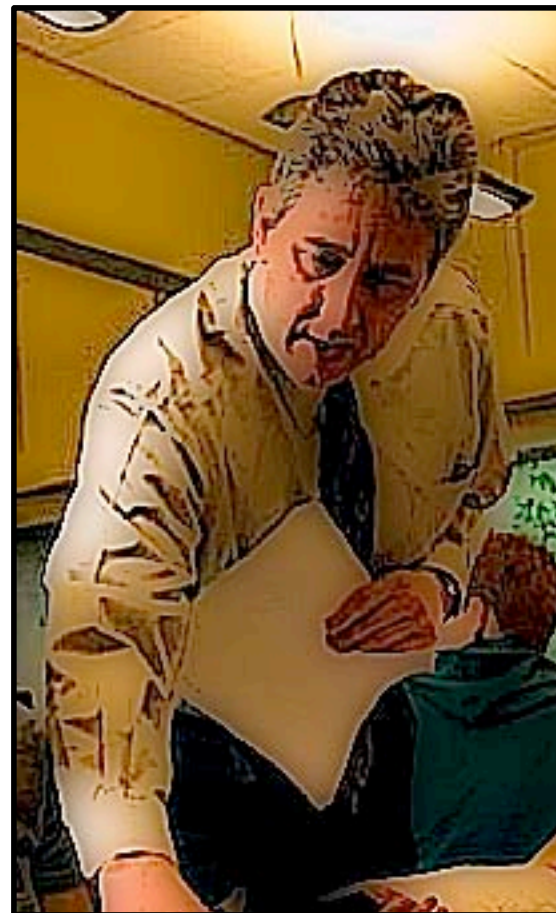
MR. PEARL TURNS
HIS ATTENTION BACK
TO PERFUMING.

SOME OF MR. PEARL'S LOYAL CUSTOMERS WONDER WHY HE IS NOT MORE WELL-KNOWN, MORE SUCCESSFUL.

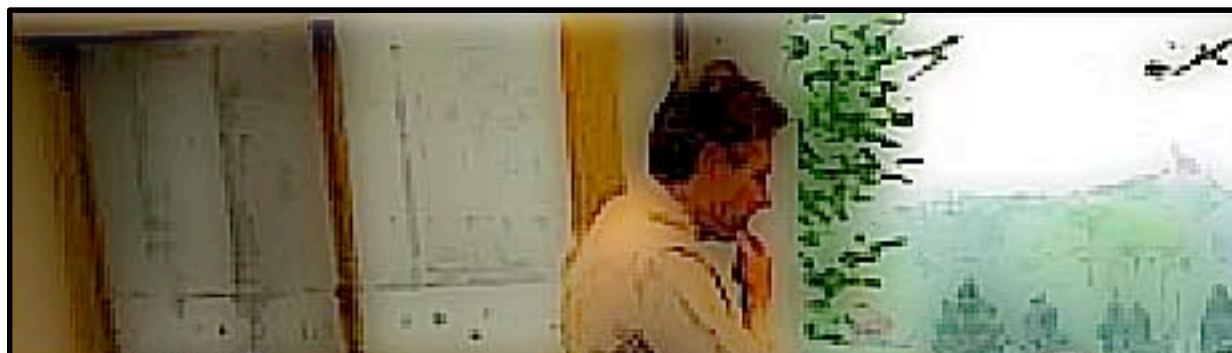
CUSTOMERS RARELY DEPART EMPTY-HANDED, FOR WHO DOESN'T DESIRE A BOTTLE OF THEIR OWN ESSENCE?

OR, THEY WONDER, IS IT A FLAW IN ADVERTISING?

MR. PEARL'S BREWING METHODS ARE UNIQUE AND GENUINE. HE HAS NEVER MISLABELED, UNDERBREWED, OR FALLEN FLAT.



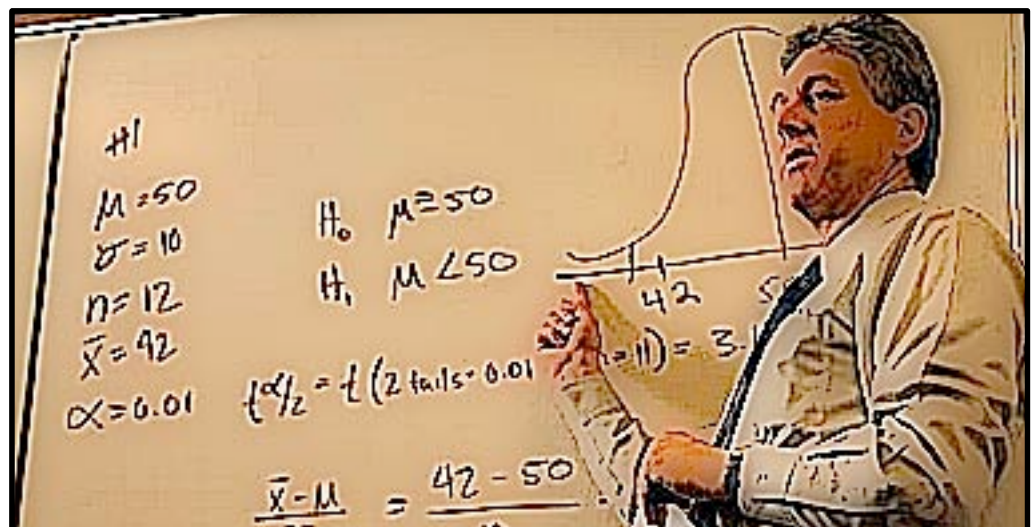
PERHAPS, SOME SPECULATE, HE IS MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN HE SEEMS, AND HIS MODEST SITUATION IS SIMPLY PREFERENCE.



SOME ESSENCES COME TO MR PEARL QUITE EASILY—BEAUTY, HIS FIRST SCENT, TOOK ONLY A FEW WEEKS TO COMPLETE, START TO FINISH.

OTHERS TAKE LONGER.

THE ESSENCE MR PEARL IS CURRENTLY CHASING HAS ALREADY USURPED THREE-AND-A-HALF YEARS.



IT WAS NEARLY TEN YEARS AGO THAT HE FIRST ENCOUNTERED THE IDEA, BUT THE CONCEPT WAS TOO ELUSIVE THEN.



SO INSTEAD HE
BOTTLED JEST AND
CHASTITY.



THEN IT TOOK HIM SEVERAL YEARS TO CHASE DOWN CLARITY ...



... BUT THE CHASE ALSO LED TO ...

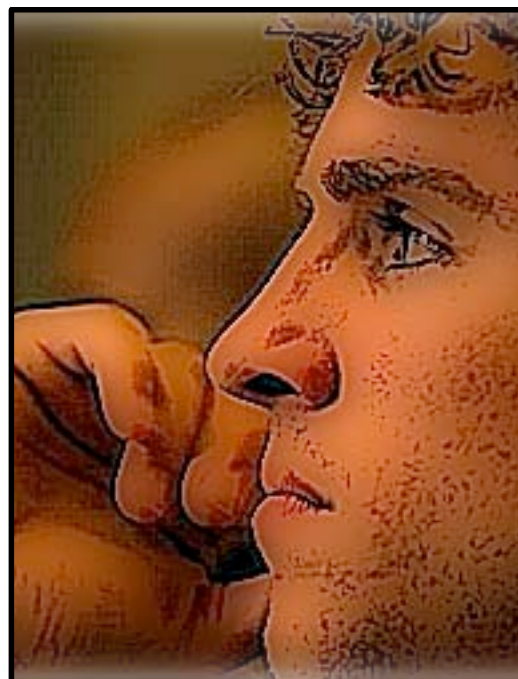
... GRAVITY ...



... TENACITY ...



... AND CUNNING.

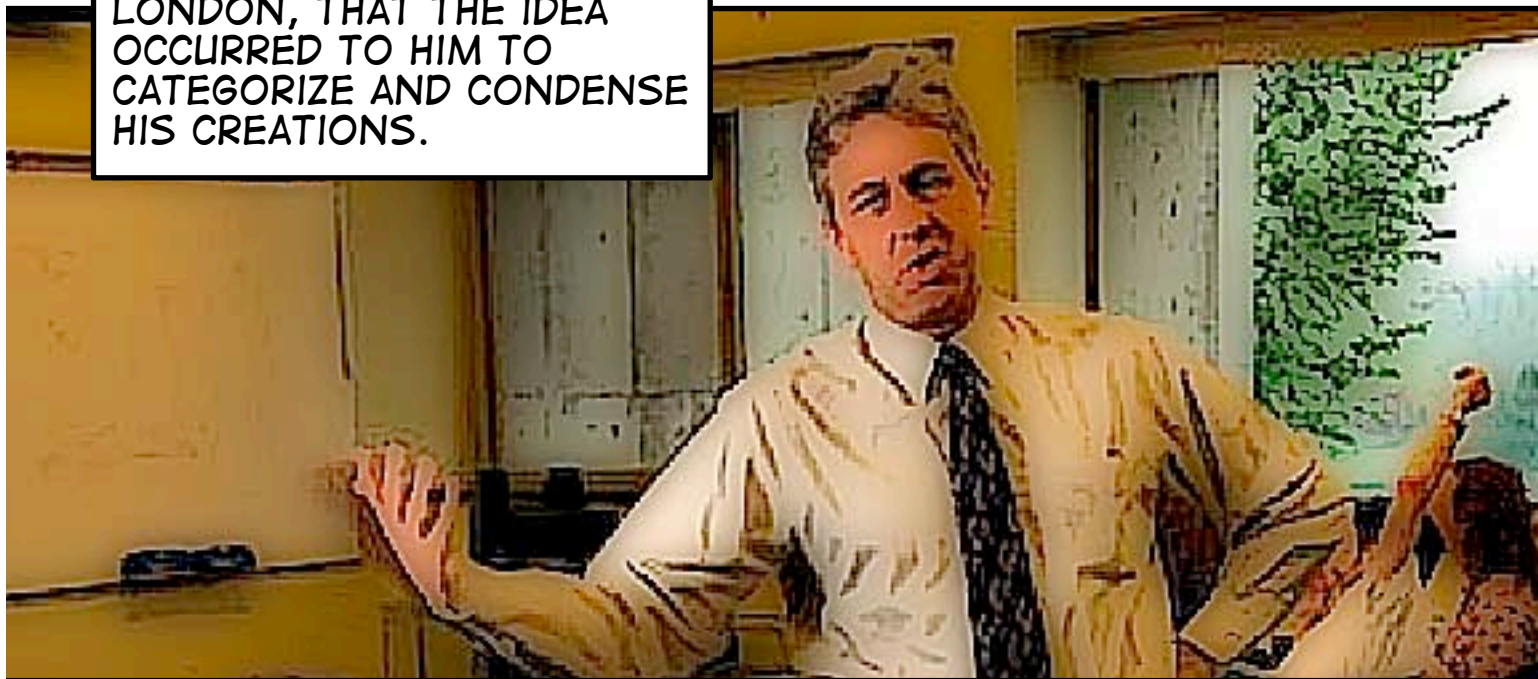


IT WAS CUNNING
THAT CHANGED
EVERYTHING.

CUNNING HAS
UNDERTONES OF
EARTHINESS, THE
SCENT IS
MUSTIER THAN
ANY OTHER MR.
PEARL HAS
BOTTLED. THE
PERFECTLY
TRANSLUCENT
LIQUID HAS NOT
EVEN A GLIMMER
OF COLOR.



IT WAS JUST AFTER THE COMPLETION OF CUNNING, WHILE MR PEARL WAS IN LONDON, THAT THE IDEA OCCURRED TO HIM TO CATEGORIZE AND CONDENSE HIS CREATIONS.



EXPANSION, EXPERIMENTATION, ELABORATION, CLARIFICATION HAD ABSORBED HIM SINCE THE INCEPTION OF HIS BOTTLING DAYS. BUT HE WAS AGING, AND THE TRAINING OF AN APPRENTICE WOULD REQUIRE NOT ONLY INSTRUCTION IN METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS, BUT SCHOOLING IN DIAGNOSIS. AND THAT, MR PEARL THOUGHT, COULD BE MADE EASIER FIRST BY CATEGORIZATION AND SECOND BY CONDENSATION.



SO MR PEARL TOOK A YEAR TO CATEGORIZE, TO DESCRIBE, LABEL, AND ORGANIZE HIS BOTTLES.



HIS NEWEST PROJECT IS CONDENSATION ITEM NUMBER ONE: *adolescence*.

A DECADE AGO, WITHOUT HESITATION, HE WOULD HAVE CREATED A DOZEN OR SO SCENTS FOR EACH VEILED QUALITY OF ADOLESCENCE—RESILIENCE, CREATIVITY, AUDACITY, CONNECTION, PERSISTENCE, MORATORIUM, INDEFATIGABILITY. BUT INSTEAD MR PEARL HAS UNDERTAKEN THE CREATION OF ONE ENCOMPASSING SCENT.

LESS WORK, IN THEORY. AND BESIDES, ADOLESCENCE IS SELF-DESCRIPTIVE; ANY IDIOT ASSISTANT CAN SELL ADOLESCENCE TO A TEENAGER.

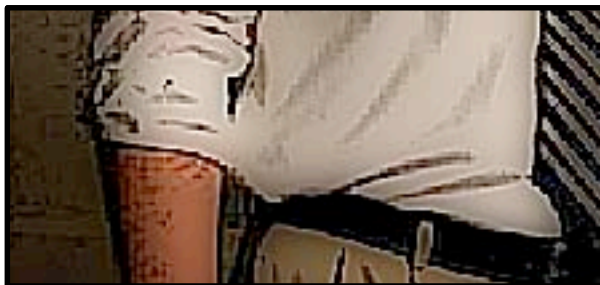




MR. PEARL CONTINUES HIS
WORK ON ADOLESCENCE
THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER.



THE SHOP IS UNCOMFORTABLY WARM, BUT MR PEARL
ACKNOWLEDGES IT ONLY BY ROLLING UP HIS SHIRTSLEEVES.





AS THEY HAVE
DONE
CONSISTENTLY
SINCE THE
SHOP'S
OPENING,
ONCE OR
TWICE A WEEK
A CUSTOMER
COMES IN
SEARCH OF A
SCENT.



BUT MR PEARL,
WHO HAS
TIRELESSLY
DIAGNOSED
CUSTOMERS AND
CAREFULLY
SELECTED SCENTS
FOR THEM FOR
DECADES HAS
RECENTLY GROWN
IMPATIENT.



INSTEAD OF THE CUSTOMARY SEVEN CHOICES, MR PEARL
BEGINS OFFERING ONLY SIX, THEN FIVE, AND IN LATE AUGUST,
WHEN THE HEAT IS MOST OPPRESSIVE AND THE GLASS BOTTLES
SLIGHTLY WARM TO THE TOUCH, MR PEARL BEGINS PROVIDING
ONLY THREE CHOICES TO ANYONE WHO COMES TO HIS SHOP.

NATURALLY, THIS MEANS HIS
DIAGNOSES BEGIN TO ERR.

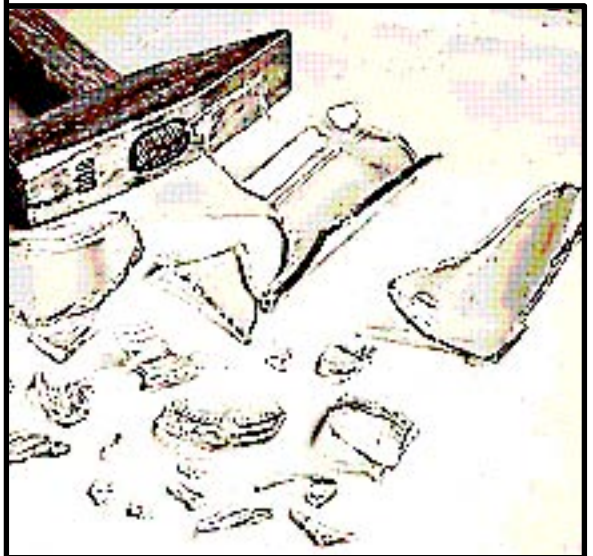
CUSTOMERS BEGIN LEAVING
UNSATISFIED.



"LESS CUSTOMERS,
LESS INTERRUPTIONS,"
HE ARGUES TO
HIMSELF.

DESPITE HIS LONG HOURS OF TOIL
AND CONCENTRATION, MR.
PEARL'S PROJECT IS NOT GOING
WELL. HE COMBINES THE
ESSENCES OF CREATIVITY,
PERSISTENCE, AND MORATORIUM
WITH JUST A SPLASH OF AUDACITY,
BUT THE PERFUME IS TOO
STRAIGHTFORWARD, AND LACKS
THE UNDERTONES OF THE AGE.

HE ADDS RESILIENCE AND
INCREASES THE AMOUNT OF
AUDACITY, BUT THE RESULT IS TOO
HARSH WITHOUT ENOUGH GIVE. HE
TRIES COMBINATION AFTER
COMBINATION, BUT EACH
COMBINATION LACKS SOMETHING.



2 MONTHS LATER
HELEN RETURNS TO MR.
PEARL'S PERFUMERIA FOR
A REFILL OF COMPASSION



HELEN
NOTICES
THAT THE
BOTTLES IN
THE WINDOW
DISPLAY ARE
dusty.



MR PEARL GLANCES UP WHEN SHE
ENTERS, NODS, AND RETURNS TO
HIS CALCULATIONS.





I AM AFRAID
NOT, MA'AM.

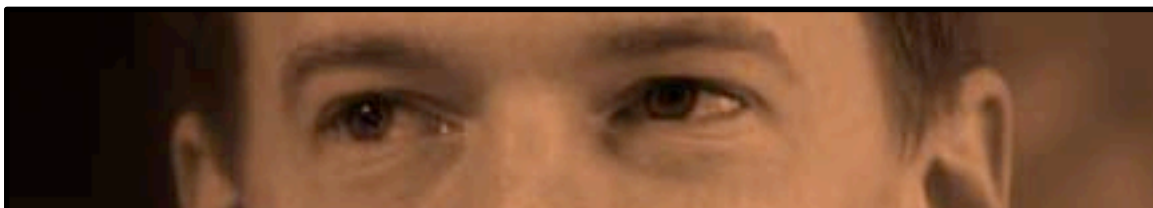
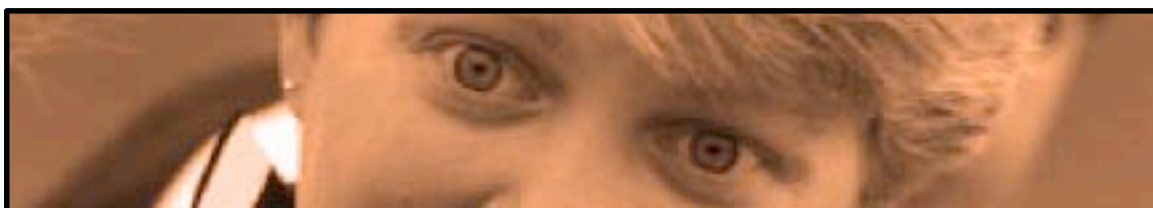
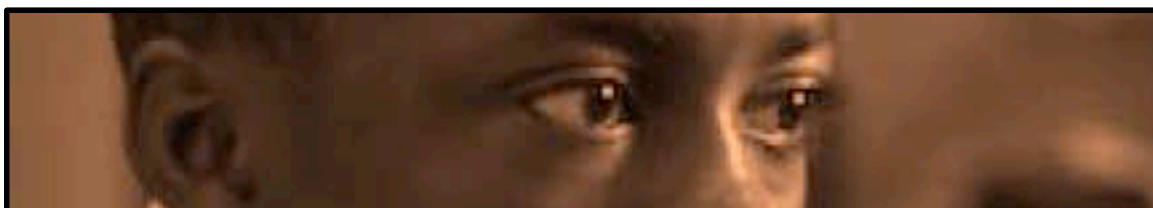
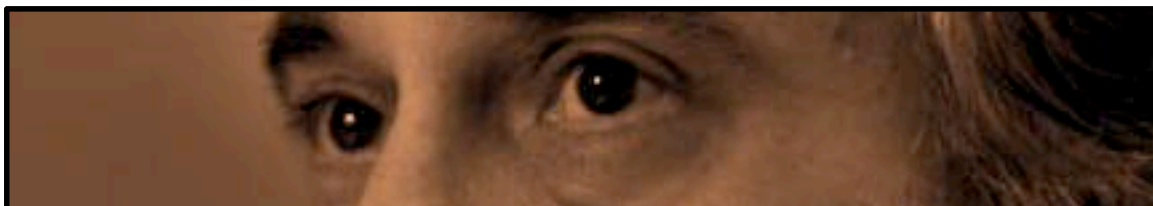
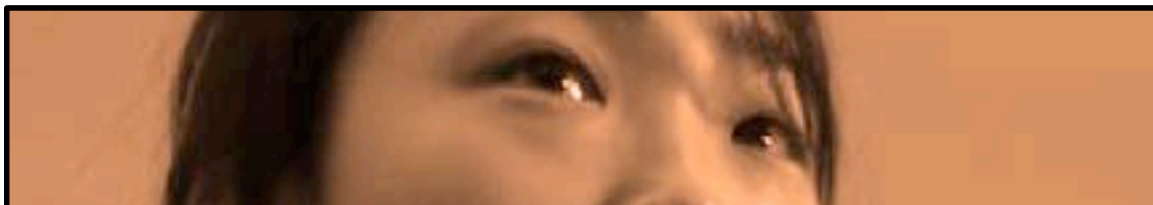
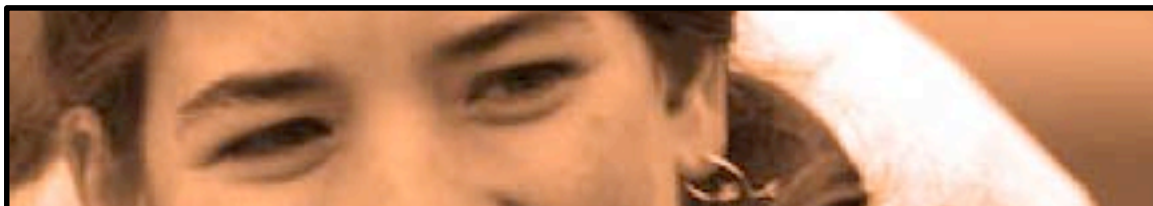
MR PEARL, I DON'T
EXPECT YOU HAVE ANY
SCENTS APPROPRIATE
FOR A THIRTEEN-YEAR-
OLD GIRL? I WOULD LIKE
TO FIND ONE FOR MY
DAUGHTER.



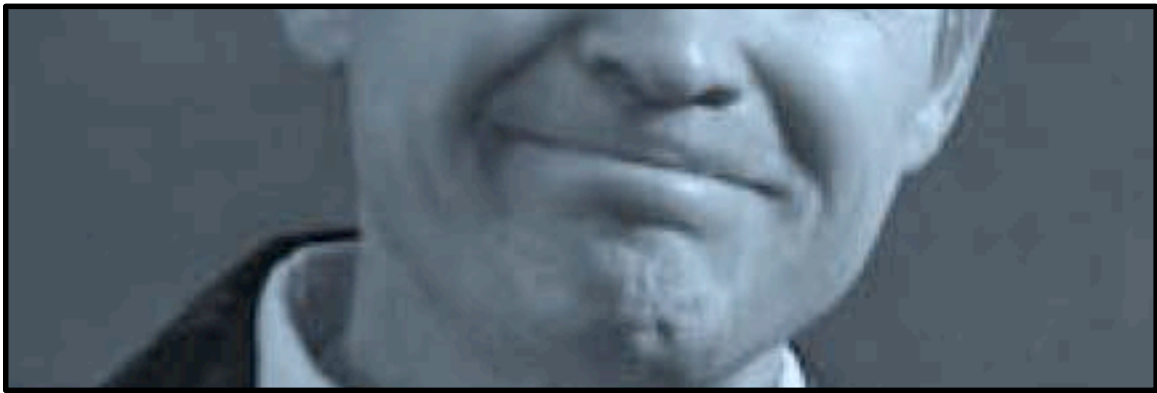
NONE AT ALL? I HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING, IF YOU HAVE A
SCENT CALLED **companionship**, OR
PERHAPS **belonging** ... I BELIEVE A SCENT WITH
ONE OF THOSE NAMES MAY BE JUST RIGHT FOR HER.



MR. PEARL LOOKS UP, AND ACTUALLY
SEES HELEN FOR THE FIRST TIME TODAY.

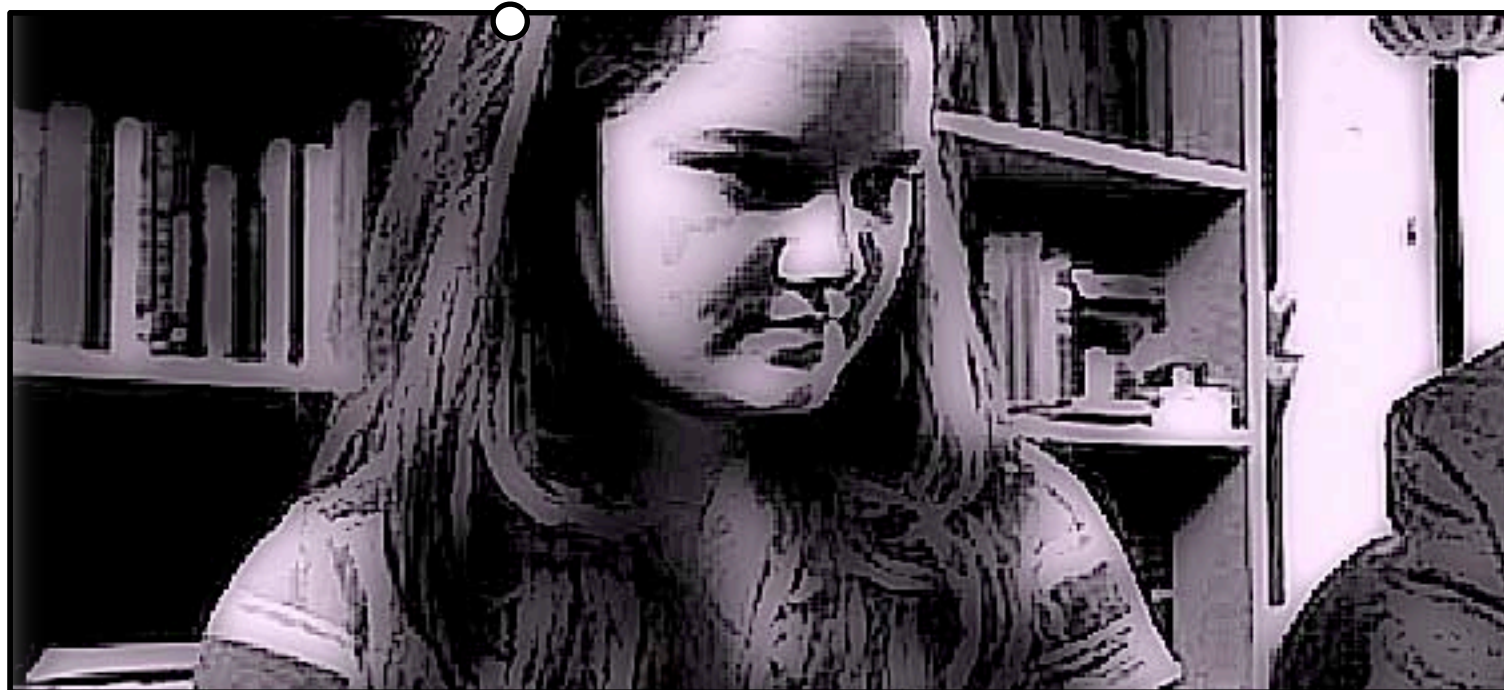
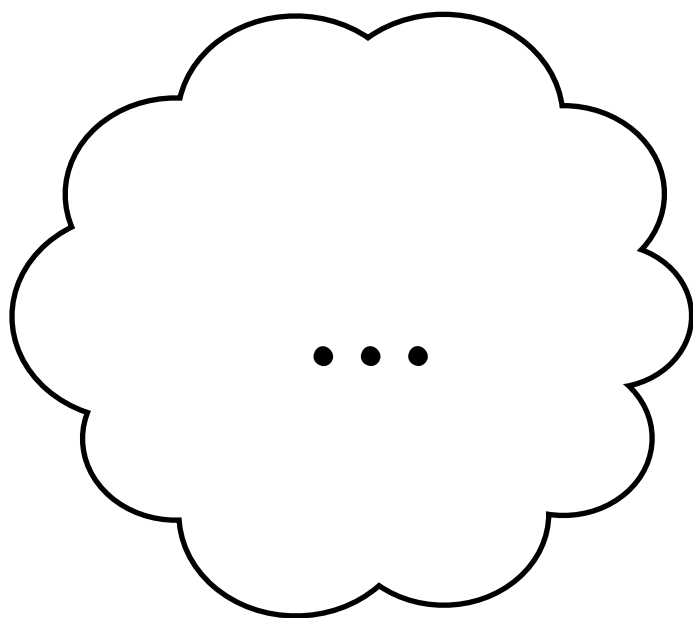


BELONGING?
I DON'T HAVE A SCENT
CALLED BELONGING.



MR PEARL STANDS UP, AND DISAPPEARS INTO THE BACK OF THE SHOP — HIS LABORATORY.





AS SHE WAITS FOR MR. PEARL TO RETURN, HELEN
EXAMINES THE BOTTLES BEHIND THE COUNTER.

SHE NOTICES HOW THEY ARE CAREFULLY GROUPED IN KIND,

mercy AND COMFORT

TOGETHER,

strength

NEAR

DILIGENCE

patience AND acceptance

ON THE SAME SHELF.



AFTER CALLING

MR. PEARL?

BUT RECEIVING NO RESPONSE,
HELEN VENTURES BEHIND THE
COUNTER AND PAST THE CURTAIN
INTO THE LABORATORY.

MADAM, I THINK
WE HAVE IT!

HERE, COME
HERE.

ALLOW ME TO
SHOW YOU.

COME HERE.



belonging

THE SCENT ENCOMPASSES HER.



HELEN SILENTLY MOVES TO SIT ON A STOOL BESIDE MR. PEARL.

YES, YES.

HERE.

SMELL.

MR. PEARL
WAVES THE
SMALLER
BOTTLE
BENEATH
HELEN'S
NOSE.





AH, HA!
YOU SEE?
WE HAVE DONE IT, YES
WE HAVE.
BUT HERE ...
THIS IS THE REAL
MASTERPIECE.

SMELLING
THE
PERFECTLY
CLEAR,
SHINING
LIQUID
FILLS
HELEN
WITH
THE
DESIRE
TO
TAKE
A
TRIP,
OR
HAVE
AN
ADVENTURE,
OR
MEET
SOMEONE
NEW.

THE
SCENT
IS
UNFAMILIAR
TO
HER,
BUT
SHE
FEELS
FLEETING
INSPIRATION

...

AND
SIMULTANEOUSLY,
HELEN
FEELS
COMPLETELY
DEVOID
OF
FEAR.



BUT MOMENTS LATER ...

inexpressible sadness

SHE HOLDS BACK THE TEARS ... BUT BARELY.



AND THEN A THIRD
LAYER OF THE
SCENT ARRIVES ...

HELEN TRIES
TO DESCRIBE
IT TO
HERSELF, BUT
WORDS FAIL.

longing

desire

transformation

WHAT WAS THAT?





THAT, MADAM, IS THE
CULMINATION.

IT IS CONDENSATION
PROJECT NUMBER ONE.

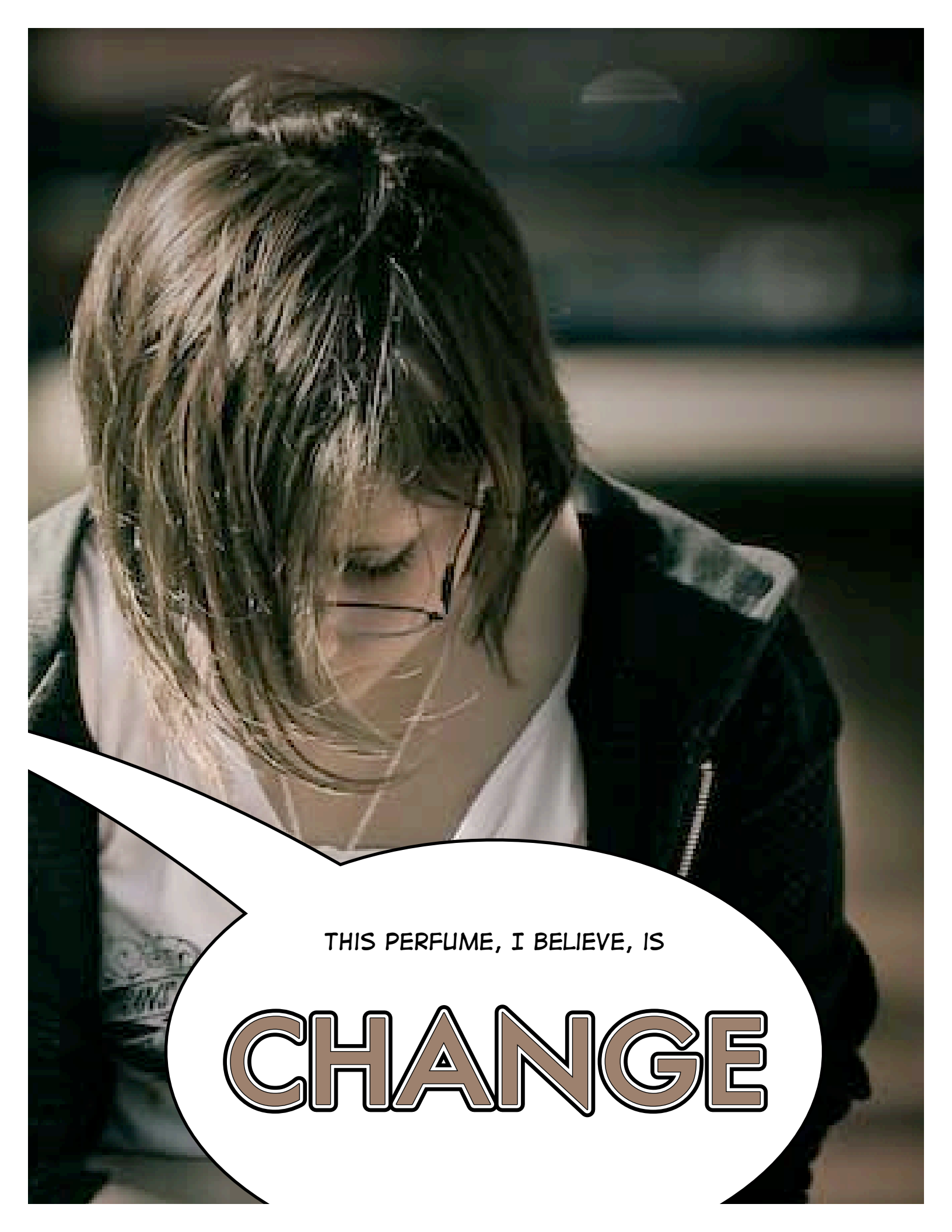
IT IS THE COMBINATION OF
SEVEN SCENTS.

IT IS A SCENT SPECIFICALLY
DESIGNED FOR A CERTAIN AGE, A
CERTAIN STAGE OF GROWTH.

IT IS, MY DEAR,
DESIGNED FOR YOUTH,
MASTERFULLY
CONCOCTED FOR THE
ADOLESCENT STATE.

THIS PERFUME, I BELIEVE,
IS A SCENT FOR

PUBERTY.



THIS PERFUME, I BELIEVE, IS

CHANGE