

## Weird Words: “Pink Lemonade”

Written by Sean M. Davis  
Monday, 14 March 2011 16:14

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FANGORIA

The wonders and joy of childhood are also prime targets for terror, as Sean M. Davis reveals in his Weird Words entry, “Pink Lemonade.” Enjoy...

“Pink Lemonade”

Captain Teddy threw himself to the ground, covering his head against enemy fire. The Zorghians swarmed out of the deep bushes, over the wall that surrounds the garbage cans and dropped from the trees. Rising, Teddy retreated to safety behind the slide, firing back at the filthy purple creatures. Their stalk-eyes waving wildly, the spider-like bad guys halted their charge, surprised at the sudden onslaught.

Teddy hitched up his Levis, thinking. The slobbering beasts had him practically surrounded. He could make a run for the swings, blast off and leave this planet. But then he'd never save the beautiful Princess Crystal from the evil clutches of the Zorghian king, Drikdel.

Carefully, Teddy peered around the slide. But as soon as the sunlight flashed in his blonde hair, a blast of pure entomical energy crashed into the metal hiding him. The shot ricocheted up into the bright orange sky of Sarnania-9. Then, the captain got his most brilliant and daring plan ever!

Teddy reached into his pocket, jumping out from his hiding spot at the same time. He pulled out a quarter and held it up towards the sun. Angling it just right, sunlight reflected into the eyes of the closest bad guy. The usually-nocturnal Zorghian howled in pain. Emboldened, Teddy stepped forward, moving the coin around to make sure to get –

Something crashed into Teddy from behind, sending him sprawling.

“Watch it, spaz!”

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The towheaded Teddy rolled onto his back. The kid that had kicked him had already run around to get back in line for the slide. A girl, big barrettes clacking, came barreling down the slide at him.

“Hey! Get outta the way!” she shrieked.

Teddy rolled clear just in time. The girl flew off the slick metal, landing on her feet and racing around to follow the other boy back at the back of the line.

The courageous Captain Teddy stood and dusted himself off. He walked over to the swings, looking around and alert for another sneak attack. He’d been fighting the Zorgothians his whole career, and he knew that they never retreated for long.

He stood behind and to the left of his favorite swing, waiting for the older girl that was on it to jump off.

“Come on, swing hog,” he called at the girl.

“What? You—”

“Kendra, come on!” some woman called from the parking lot. “It’s time for lunch!”

With a preteen growl, the girl jumped off the swing. Teddy stuck his tongue out at her, grabbed the swing’s chain and pulled it to a stop. Jumping up onto the seat, he drew a deep breath.

The supersonic spacemotorcycle blasted off, rocketing up into the orange sky of Sarnania-9.

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Princess Crystal held on tight around Teddy's stomach. It hadn't been easy defeating the evil king, but it was all in a day's work for an intrepid space captain.

One of his instrument panels started beeping. Oh no! A Var-naq destroyer was waiting for him. And it was aiming its main gun right at him! Princess Crystal clutched him tighter and he could see the glow in the gun's barrel—

No. The beeping was just his wristwatch.

Teddy stopped pumping his legs and looked at it. Aw man. Noon. He had to go home for lunch. His mom had watched him set the alarm and told him to come straight home when it went off.

No. Matter. What.

When she said it like that, Teddy knew she was serious with a capital S.

He pumped his legs hard to regain height. When he was the highest he could get, he jumped. Behind him, the swing clanged against the set's metal leg. He sailed through the air, bracing himself for landing. He thought maybe...maybe this time...yes he would!

Teddy landed where the grass met the sand. The shock of the harder ground shot up his body and his teeth clacked together. But it was totally worth it! It was the farthest he'd ever jumped before in his life.

He walked over to the bike rack on unsteady legs. Pulling his blue and yellow Huffy from the crowd, he swung his leg over, and pedaled hard as he could. Reaching the curb, he pulled up on the handlebars. He and his bike flew out into the street. A car that Teddy hadn't seen honked at him.

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But he had no time to watch for magical horseless carriages. He was a Knight of the Grand Order and he had to get home to report to his queen that the goblin rebellion had been defeated; the kingdom was once again safe.

Teddy turned left at the first corner. Mr. Lincoln stood watering his front lawn. He waved at Teddy, who didn't notice. Nearby, the traffic on the Southfield freeway honked and whirred in the summer heat. But the wind felt good on the young knight's face. His stomach growled, thinking about the banquet that the queen would serve in his honor.

Teddy was five blocks from home when he saw something on the next block up. He squinted, checked behind him and crossed to ride along the other side of the street. As he got closer, he recognized Chris, who stood, two card tables in front of him, on the sidewalk. Teddy didn't pause or even look when he crossed to the next block. He coasted to a stop in front of his friend and dropped his bike out from under him.

"Hey, Chris. What're ya doing?"

"Sellin' lemonade, doofus. What's it look like I'm doin'? You want some?"

"I'dn't know lemons were pink."

"Shut up," Chris snarled. "You want some or not?"

Teddy clutched his hands together and backed up a step. Chris was four months older than he was, and just the coolest. It was never that he meant to hurt Teddy. They were friends and he always apologized. Chris wasn't Phil after all.

"Yeah, sure," Teddy said. "Gimme some."

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Smiling, the older boy said, "That'll be 50 cents."

As Chris poured the gleaming pink lemonade, Teddy dug around in his pockets. He grabbed the quarter that had saved him from the Zorghothians. Then, he pulled out a shiny new dime and a dingy nickel. Forty cents.

And an empty pocket!

He rooted around, clawing at the lint at the bottom, but there was nothing left. He shoved his hand into his other hip pocket. Again, nothing. Both hands in his back pockets turned up only three measly cents. Remembering the wicked Indian burn Chris had given him last week, Teddy turned out both front pockets. Fuzz drifted down to the July-parched grass.

"Uh, Ch—ris... I only got 43 cents."

The other boy's dark eyebrows pulled together. His whole face wrinkled and lowered in a frown. The doofy bum didn't even have fifty cents.

Then, Chris remembered his last customer. The guy had emptied his pockets for a half cup. He said he couldn't have a whole one, on account of the darned di-beat-eez. After he'd left, Chris had counted all the change the man had given him. Almost three dollars!

His fists relaxed. He smiled at Teddy, who exhaled all in a rush, smiling back.

Chris picked up the cup and took a huge gulp. Then, he pushed it across the table, saying, "There. Forty-three cents' worth."

Teddy took the cup from the older boy, still smiling but watchful. Rubbing the small of his back

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where he'd been kicked, Teddy peered down into the Dixie cup. There were bits of lemon pulp floating in it. He'd never had pink lemonade before, wondering if there were really pink lemons growing somewhere. Or maybe they came from Fucia, the fruit planet.

Teddy took a breath, brought the cup to his lips and drank.

It was sweet! When he swallowed, it left a sour taste behind. He swallowed hard again, his throat clicking. Now he was thirstier than before. Looking down at the nasty pink lemonade, he thought he could feel it spreading through his whole body, drying him out. This must be what it felt like to be lost in the desert, talking to beetles, and dying from thirst.

The sun beat down on him, heat baking up at him from the blacktop. The dry grass crinkled under his feet, sounding like empty chip bags. Still holding the cup, Teddy turned around. The searing metal and hot black rubber of his bike mocked him. Another four blocks to go with the evil pink lemonade drying him out every inch of the way.

Teddy took a breath, the air whispering across his desert tongue. Almost fainting, his shaking hand held out the cup towards Chris. When the older boy wouldn't take it, he dropped his hand to the table, some of the lemonade sloshing over the side. His other hand searched for his friend.

"What?" Chris demanded, shoving the groping hand away.

"Wa-ter," Teddy gasped. "I ne-need water...or I'll die!"

"Go home and get your own water."

"Please," he whispered, falling to his knees.

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Chris groaned and rolled his eyes. Turning, he went to get the little wussy a cup of water.

Teddy fell to the ground and rolled back and forth. The lemonade, reaching his stomach, bit into him. He started sweating, wheezing dryly. His eyesight blurred, then darkened as a shape towered over him. He flailed weakly, hands limp at the ends of his scrawny arms.

"Hey, stop!" Chris said, flicking his friend's forehead. "Sit up, doofus. I gotcher water."

Teddy grabbed at the cup, tearing it from his friend's hand and tipping it back. Water flooded his mouth, overflowed and ran down his neck in a glorious damp rush. He swallowed what was in his mouth, his tongue singing in relief. Chris' jaw dropped, then he rolled his eyes again. Not bothering to help Teddy up, he returned to his post behind the tables.

Rising to his knees, Teddy shoved the pink lemonade back towards Chris, who glared at it. He took it and looked into the cup to see if Teddy had loogied in it. No, just some floating pieces of pulp.

Still suspicious, Chris stated, "You're not gettin your money back."

"I don't care," he replied, struggling to his feet. "Just... Can I have some more water?"

Chris shrugged and, looking around the empty street, poured the pink lemonade back in the pitcher. He grabbed the empty cup out of his friend's shaking hand and went to get the little wussy another cup of water.

While he was gone, Teddy watched the pitcher of lemonade, hypnotized. It was clear plastic, so he could see the pieces of pulp dancing. They swirled in circles, traded places with each other, and then went back. Teddy stared until his eyes bugged out. His drying tongue puffed up inside his mouth.

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*Drink me.*

Teddy squeezed his eyes shut, cowering back. For a second, a face had formed itself out of the floating lemon pieces and pressed itself against the plastic. Peeking through squinched eyelids, it was gone. His stomach clenched and cramped. Shivering, Teddy pictured the face, glaring at him, angry at him. But not just like when Chris lost at checkers. More. What?

Disappointed.

Angry at him because he'd swallowed part of it; disappointed because he hadn't drunk more? Teddy had dried out with just a sip. If he'd drunk the whole cup—

The little boy shuddered.

The screen door slammed, snapping Teddy's attention away from the pitcher. Chris clomped down the driveway, carrying a bigger cup. Soon as he was within reach, Teddy grabbed at it, but Chris shoved him away, tugging the cup back out of his reach. Teddy felt so sick that he was almost crying. All he needed was a drink of water. That would make it all better. Chris brought his hand closer so Teddy could almost— Then, he snatched it back again.

“Gimmeit!” Teddy screamed, dry voice cracking.

“Jeez!” Chris said, too stunned to tug the cup out of reach. Teddy seized it. “I was just messin' with you.” Teddy didn't answer, too busy gulping. “Jeez, what's eatin you?”

*I am.*

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Teddy choked and sprayed water.

“Aw, man! Come on!” Chris yelled at him, wiping at his shirt.

Coughing, Teddy swung his head around and looked at the pitcher. He squeezed his eyes shut, then opened them, but the face didn't disappear. Its eyes squinted at him. Its sharp nose and pointed chin pressed against the plastic. Teddy thought it would break through any second and he stepped away. The wicked grin stretched wider than the face, but part of the lower jaw was missing. As Teddy's eyes widened, a sharp pain stabbed into his stomach. Sharp. Like the gnashing teeth in that inhuman grin. The face bit off a peal of high, horrible laughter, then dissolved.

Teddy snapped his eyes up to Chris, who'd sat down behind the tables again. “Did you see that?”

“What?”

Teddy pointed a shaking finger at the pitcher.

“You did hock one in 'ere!”

“No. The face! It was all gross and...” Chris tucked his chin close to his chest, leaning away from Teddy with cocked eyebrows. “The laugh! Did you – Aw, f'rget it.”

The face was gone; Chris hadn't heard the horrible laughter. Maybe it would never come back. Dry throat scratchy, Teddy drank the rest of the water, then held out the cup for a refill. Chris smacked it away.

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“More,” the younger boy wheezed. “Please.”

Chris looked hopeful. “I could spray you with the hose.” With a shrug, he said, “Just have some pink lemonade.”

Teddy’s fist clenched at his side. It drew back, then shot forward. It happened so fast that Chris didn’t feel anything at first. He sprawled backwards out of his chair, crunching into the dry lawn. Then, the middle of his chest started to hurt. Teddy dodged around the table, mangled plastic cup still in his hand. Chris cowered down against the hard ground.

“I think. That it’s. A bad. Batch.”

The tops of the trees rustled in the breeze and there was a bubbly sound, like underwater laughter. Teddy’s deep, angry breathing quickened. Heavy feet clomped on the asphalt. Chris could see through Teddy’s legs that someone stood just behind him.

“Hi, girls,” said a false-high and scary voice. Teddy turned, stepping away from Chris. “Whatcha doin’?”

Phil loomed over both of them, the most feared bully at Bryson elementary. He always wore the same leather bomber jacket, even during the summer. Cuz cool guys never sweat.

Chris scrambled up and stood, just a little, behind Teddy. The bully took another clomping step forward, unbrushed grin wide. He scratched at his crotch.

“I said, whatcha doin’?”

“N-nothin,” Chris squeaked, trying to puff up. “You know, just chillin’ and scopin’—”

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"Looks like you sellin' ' *pink* lemonade," Phil said through his grin. "You some kinda faggot, boy?"

Indignation overwhelmed Chris' good sense. "I am not!"

"Whatever, faggot." He took another step forward. Teddy stepped back, giving the bully a straight shot. "How much money you got?"

Teddy started to sneak away. Maybe if he was quiet he could be on his bike and away before Phil knew what was happening. He'd go home, fill up his big squeeze bottle with water, sit down with THE BLACK CAULDRON, read and drink and drink and—

His stomach cramped. A hand grabbed him from behind, spun him around. Phil's pimply face and stinking breath assaulted him.

"Where you think you goin'?" Phil demanded.

Looking down, Teddy said, "I'm going home for some water."

"Well, you in luck!" Phil sang, slinging an arm around Teddy's shoulders. "We got some pink lemonade right 'ere."

Bubbling laughter filled the air. The face was back, hungry incomplete grin pressed against the plastic. Teddy imagined that thing crawling around inside him, taking bites and drying him up. He'd crawl home like he'd just crossed a desert and the doctor would tell his mother her little boy had dried up and died.

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Teddy shrugged out from underneath Phil’s arm. “No way.”

Phil’s predatory smile widened, his lips curling back against his teeth. His eyebrows drew together; his nostrils flared and relaxed, flared, relaxed. It was almost funny.

Phil threw his arm out and seized Teddy’s neck. Face squeezed into the bully’s body, Teddy smelled sour grunge and mellow leather. Phil swung the smaller boy around and bent him over the table, facing the sky. His round, pimply face filled Teddy’s vision, then it was gone. The sky looked so free and blue.

Teddy couldn’t see him, but he heard Chris. “Phil, come on, man. Ease—”

A loud crack of skin hitting skin. Chris cried out, then started sobbing.

“Shut up, faggot. ’Less you want summa what your boyfriend’s gonna get.”

Teddy struggled against the arm holding him down. Phil slammed his elbow down on his sternum. All the breath exploded out of him and he gasped, mouth gaping for air that he couldn’t pull into his lungs.

Phil loomed over him again, pitcher of pink lemonade held in his free hand.

*Relax, Theodore. I’m not going to hurt you. I’m going to eat you!*

Teddy thrashed weakly, still struggling to breathe. Phil leaned harder on the arm holding him down. Teddy’s legs kicked frantically at the air.

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"Drink up, f\*\*ker."

Teddy saw the face for the last time. It moved against the side of pitcher. The missing part of its jaw made it uglier. The rabid grin opened, its tongue snaking out and licking the plastic in anticipation. The thing's laughter frothed the pink lemonade.

Chris didn't hear; he was too busy crying.

Phil didn't hear; he was too busy pouring.

*Sean M. Davis has been writing poetry since 1996 and fiction since 1998. His short story "First Word" was published in the Wayne Literary Review 2010 and his tale "Secret History" will be in the forthcoming anthology R'LYEH RISING, edited by William Jones. His poetry, drama and prose has earned him numerous awards, including one for a poem written in French. He is also the senior editor for the WAYNE LITERARY REVIEW 2011 and 2012. You can find his story excerpts, poetry and articles about writing [here](#).*

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