

Olivia Duby

Age: 17, Grade: 12

School Name: Saginaw Arts & Sciences Academy, Saginaw, MI

Educator: Karen Horwath

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The Savant

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To “defenestrate,” or alternatively “defenestration,” is sometimes defined as the act of throwing *something* out a window. However, according to most dictionaries, the actual definition of the word primarily refers to the act of throwing *someone* out a window. Surprisingly, it’s a word with a wide and varied history. You wouldn’t think that so many people had thrown others out of windows over the years, but apparently, it is enough of a common practice to warrant a word that refers to it—a word that has been around for centuries, no less.

It’s certainly a fun and amusing word, and you don’t hear it frequently. I think it should be said more often. However, that does require the frequent occurrence of people being thrown out of windows, an occurrence some people would find unfortunate. I, personally, have no qualms with such a thing. Some people really are just asking to be thrown out of a window, aren’t they? For example, that lithe woman walking down the streets of Paris or the young boy hitchhiking down back roads outside of Osaka. They were certainly deserving. So, in my opinion, we shouldn’t let this fantastic word fade out of the common English vernacular; what a waste that would be.

Thus, I’ve graciously committed a generous portion of my killings to the act of defenestration. What better way to immortalize a word than to increase the frequency of the act to which it refers? Think about it. Words like “murder” and “stabbing” aren’t going out of fashion anytime soon--these are the methods of less intellectual killers. I know the scholars will most certainly thank me later, being so terribly in love with their idea of the obsolete.

To be clear, though, it’s not a matter of wanting future historians and pretentious graduate students to think I never did anything wrong or wasn’t crazy or anything like that. I just need people to understand that I don’t want to be remembered as just a crazy killer or just a scholar or even just a simple dentist. I need to be all of these things, or else my true colors will fade into obscurity, like the real definition of “defenestration.” Not just the fact that the word may refer to the act of throwing something out of a window, but *also* that it refers to throwing someone out of a window.

So here I am. Inviting the woman, who I imagine will become my next victim, to an apartment I’m renting--for a quick snack and maybe a hot drink. She thinks it’s my own apartment, but I never specifically said that--she just assumed it was. I run my nails over the bumps on my borrowed keys as I lead her up to her fate.

“Wow, this is such a nice building!” she muses, following behind me. “What do you do to afford a place like this?”
A place like this, not this place

“I’m a dentist. I own my own practice.” I smile and turn the jangling keys in the lock.

She drops her bag on the bench near the door at the front of the apartment, peeking past her dirty blonde bangs and glancing around in awe. It’s a space being used by some interior design students for practice; no wonder it’s pleasing to the eye.

“I suppose you won’t be letting me put too much sugar in my tea then, Doctor,” she giggles and makes her way to the couch.

“Just for you, just this once.” I send a wink her way before walking to the kitchen to brew the tea. We will be having some snacks; after all, I can never quite think straight on an empty stomach. When I finish preparing our small meal, I place it on a tray and walk into the living room to find my guest sitting on the plush couch near the window. I place the platter on the table and sit down across from her.

“Beautiful view, isn’t it?” I muse.

“Certainly.” She reaches for her mug of tea. “A girl could really lose track of time looking out at the city like this.” The woman kicks off her heels and pushes them underneath the coffee table. My eyes wander past her to the industrial clock on the wall. The sky is bleeding a vibrant red.

“Sometimes when I get somewhere so high up like this, I look out the window, and it’s like you can feel yourself falling,” she says thoughtfully. “Something about it makes you want to jump. I hear the phenomenon is called *l’appel du vide*; it’s French for “the call of the void.”

The call of the void.

Maybe that's why the scholars had to make “defenestration” a word; too many people were called by the void.

I don’t mean to trick people, either. I don’t want to be some deal-making, hand-shaking, negotiator. If you have to trick people and lie to them to get them to a space where you can kill them in private, then you are not very good at your job, are you? I’m very honest, so honest, in fact, that I would never lie to anyone about my deadly pursuits. It’s just that no one has ever boldly asked me if I’m a murderer, so I’ve never had the opportunity to say, “Yes, I am! You got me, you sly bastard!” I don’t even lie to people about whether or not I’m going to kill them.

I sip on my cup of tea. “You must have a death wish. Maybe I’ll be a gentleman and grant it.”

She laughs like it’s some kind of joke.

But lying by omission is not lying; the real joke’s on her when she’s kicking and screaming while I drag her towards the open seventeenth-floor window. She plummets to the pavement below, and I can’t help but think that scholars will one-day point to this deed as a perfect textbook example of defenestration.