

2023

## Cinderella

Kevin Sparks  
kjs00010@mix.wvu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/calliope>



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#), and the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Sparks, Kevin (2023) "Cinderella," *Calliope*: Vol. 35, Article 38.

Available at: <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/calliope/vol35/iss1/38>

This Nonfiction is brought to you for free and open access by The Research Repository @ WVU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Calliope by an authorized editor of The Research Repository @ WVU. For more information, please contact [researchrepository@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:researchrepository@mail.wvu.edu), [emily.fidelman@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:emily.fidelman@mail.wvu.edu).

# Cinderella

Kevin Sparks

A lady introduced herself as “Cinderella” when the desk staff asked her for her name. She certainly didn’t look the part; youthful innocence and straight blonde hair exchanged for middle-aged crass and shaggy, brown curls which tangled down her back. She laughed like a villain in her jet-black one-piece when she received her incorrectly named guest pass. And though she admitted it wasn’t her name, she ignored the desk staff’s protests and walked off towards the pool.

Cinderella sauntered across the pool deck like a peacock, toting a gallon of tea in a plastic jug, to the pool’s middle lane in front of where I sat in the guard chair. I felt relieved when she placed her jug of tea far enough away from the pool to where I didn’t have to reprimand her. She hopped inconsiderately into the pool, water splashing up at me. I looked over at the other guards and made a questioning face, gesturing toward her. They laughed and shrugged their shoulders.

She swam like a true swimmer: moving through the water with an effortless strength about her stroke. I was so focused on her swimming that I hadn’t noticed the time, or his approach, until Alex tapped me on the shoulder to switch me off the stand. As we rotated, he told me with a snicker in his voice that Liam was going to be given 50 dollars for drinking out of Cinderella’s gallon of tea for at least three seconds. I laughed with him and us guards waited for the perfect opportunity to give the go-sign to Liam.

Eventually, when Cinderella did a flip-turn by the guard stand, swimming away from her odd jug, we gave the sign to Liam, and he sprinted for the tea. As he quickly downed it, I’m positive other patrons could hear the collective whispers of each guard echoing off one another as we excitedly counted to three and the choked back laughter that followed as he sprinted back

to where the guards gathered after inhaling a noticeable amount; however, Cinderella never noticed. In fact, soon after the event, she climbed out of the pool with a grunt for a refreshing tea break. He claimed his money later that day.

With about an hour until close, I gathered up all the trash to take to the pick-up area and Cinderella had seemingly finished her workout. As I walked past her, something about her grabbed my attention. Her shoulders were slacked, eyes closed, muscles eased and resting, almost like she was dreaming. Her entire demeanor had changed. Originally crass and pretentious, I saw her now as candid and forthright. On my walk back, she had her eyes open and the relaxed complexion on her face remained. She studied me as I walked, and I made eye contact and shot her a friendly smile. It was then she stopped me and thanked me for watching her and the other patrons. I remembered thinking this was odd, especially when she continued to talk. She introduced herself with her real name and after exchanging pleasantries, began a conversation about worldviews and politics. I was taken aback by her forwardness, as I felt this conversation would typically come off as inappropriate or strange, but it was oddly charming and enticing.

She talked at length about her desire to help people and her frustrations about the state of the government and the disadvantages of an American capitalist society. A major focal point of her discussion was based on environmental justice and, when she realized she was the only one talking for a long time, asked my opinion on windmills, solar energy, and perhaps why capitalist business owners and government legislation seemed worried about investing too much into it. For someone who was, at the time, uninterested and probably uneducated in the nuances of these subjects, I surprisingly gave her an honest and detailed response.

I felt relaxed and disarmed around her and she even validated me when she told me my response to her questions was thought provoking. In particular, she said she liked my analogy of comparing business owners to children who want a cookie now, rather than waiting 10 minutes to have two cookies. Perhaps it was because I was 16 at the time, and a 50-year-old woman talked to me as if I was an adult, genuinely asking for my perspective and listening to my honest answer, or maybe it was because her true person superseded my original expectations of her, but she mesmerized me. In the brief discussion we had, I left feeling like I knew so much about her, even though I had forgotten her real name by the time we were done.

The other guards made fun of me when I rejoined them and started to joke about her again from their poor first impressions of Cinderella and I suddenly felt protective of her and my connection with her. I met her the first year I worked at that pool, and I worked there for 2 more years after. Sometimes, I would see a tangle of brown curls cascading down a lady's back out of my periphery or hear a villainous laugh after a potentially mischievous interaction, and my attention would snap toward them, eagerly checking if it were hers; however, I only saw her that one time. I looked for her and thought about her frequently for the years thereafter, but on my last day working there, I left disappointed I never spoke to her again. I still think about our interaction from time to time, and often, it's fittingly at the strangest of times.