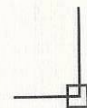
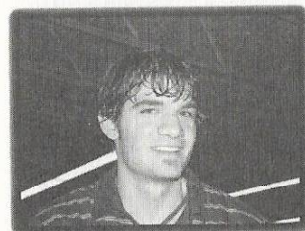
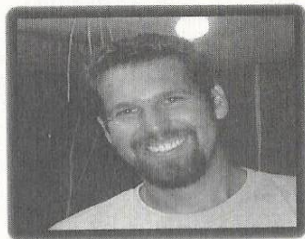


Janus
2004





Janus 2004

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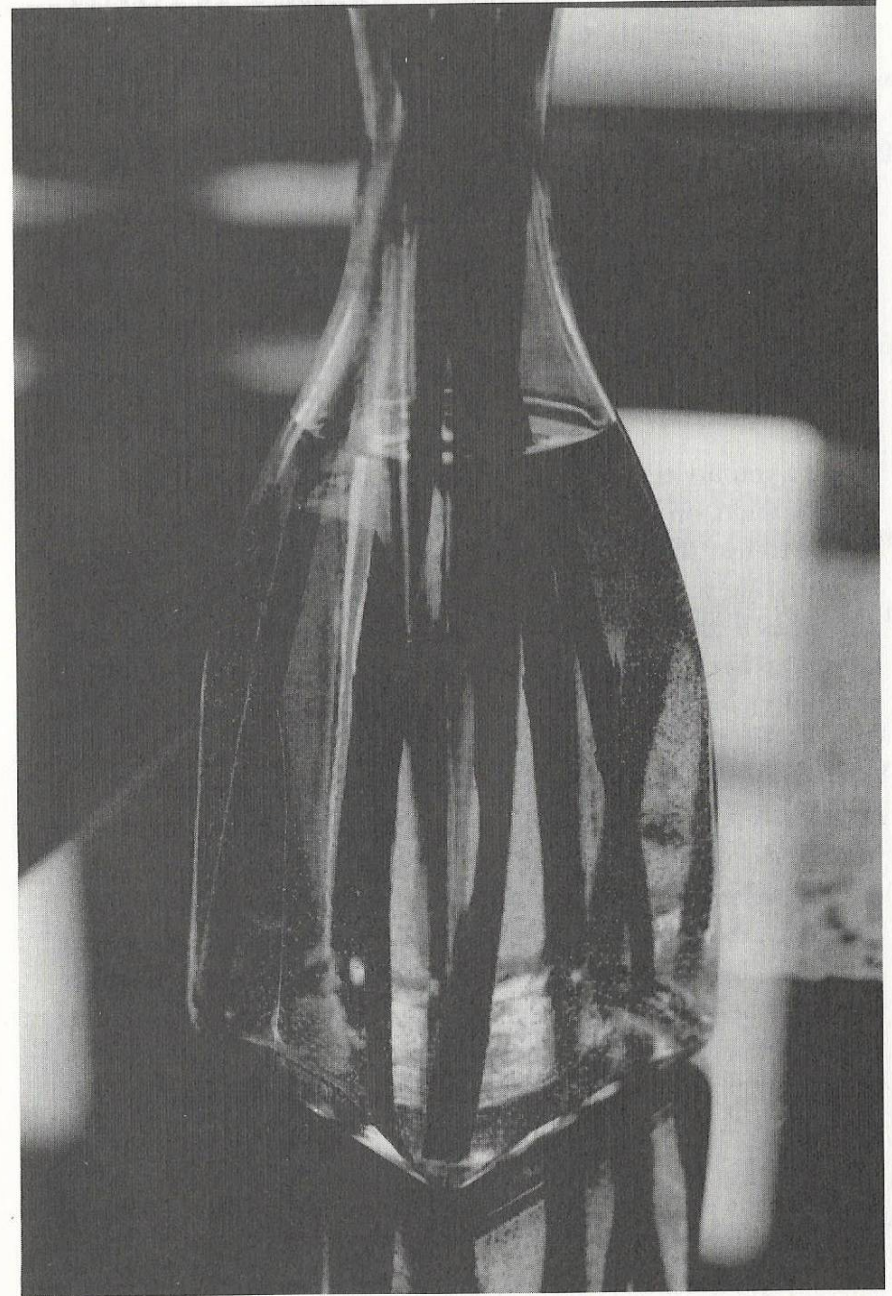
First Place Poetry Entry 2004

Sway

Brad Dowling

I trip over my shadow and look up with a smile
I've held on far too long, whispered sentiment's on trial
With the neon glow of faith and the sullen smile of hope
I'm content to take one road, though I could take them
both
I used to be the only one who could make your heart race
But pop a handful of caffeine pills and I'm easily replaced
I would take it easy if easy would take me too
In spite of all my bitterness, I'm bitter in spite of you
And I know God didn't take the stars and put them in
your eyes
All that twinkling splendor is just reflected light

First Place Graphics Entry 2004



Leigh Kellmann

First Place Prose Entry 2004

Testing the Waters

Ashley Creek

You notice how we never jump headfirst into water anymore? Even those fully prepared to become submerged test the temperature first and try to peer into the depths for hidden hazards.

So it is with people, too. We know how we feel, or maybe we just get the gist of what our minds have made up for us, but the other person is a question mark. A problem with many variables leading to one final question: if I do this, will they smack me?

And so you invite her to sit beside you. Say, for the sake of visualization, on the edge of a bed. Everything is good. So you decide to test the water a bit further out, because even getting her to sit beside you is like a baby step into the stream. Very casually, almost as if the motion were natural, you lean back on the arm closest to her, bringing yourself closer and your arm into the general vicinity of her back. She doesn't flinch.

But the drama doesn't stop there. You decide to spread out your attack strategy to utilize all the weaponry you have available. Your leg brushes hers, again almost as if by accident, but you can't believe she wouldn't notice such an obvious gesture. Suddenly, though subtly, as if to keep you guessing at your own game, she brushes her leg back against yours. Jackpot! Though you can't be quite sure if the leg-brush was accidental or a sort of plot to drive you insane. The tension is building. You decide to take another step; after all, the available data supports a barely applicable chance for physical harm.

All this time she's been analyzing your reactions: the tilt of your head, the way you keep glancing towards her as if to reassure yourself she's still there, the way you laugh, the way you lean your head gently against hers...

Before you even consider resisting, you're sucked into her aura like a whirlpool, drawn to the heart, or in this case, the back of your companion. She notices the warmth of your arm against her back, and you decide to go all out: you pull her just that small centimeter closer to where your legs touch and your arm encircles her back, leaning her against you.

Two can sit like that for almost forever, at least in her opinion. She loves the way you rock her gently to the beat of the slower music playing and tap your foot of the leg that is so affectionately pressed against hers. Your hand at her side thrills and comforts her as it caresses.

For once in her life she is content to *be* instead of thinking, because she doesn't understand what she's thinking right now and doesn't care. All she wants is to be here with you like this for as long as possible, but she's afraid because she doesn't know what to do.

I am she. And I don't know what you were thinking, and in some ways I'm glad of that, and in other ways I wish I could read your mind. Though I must admit I'd be blushing if you could read mine. I'm not forward. I don't know how to be. But I am (rather) interested in testing the waters again with you.

If you want.

Second Place Poetry Entry 2004

Darcy O'Hanlon

God looked down on your body,
So tired from hanging on,
From a life that was overwhelming you,
And wanted back His son.
So he took away the air you breathe,
And gave you what was best,
A place to be at peace,
A final place to rest.

Second Place Graphics Entry 2004

Casey Coffey



Second Place Prose Entry 2004

Coffee Shop

Dave Norman

I wrote an article about a special place, a hot spot of local activity with a flavor at once both foreign and intimate. Good reporting takes the extraordinary and brings it to light in manageable ways, with explanations that simultaneously deconstruct the mystery of the happening while building its esteem and intrigue. A careful balance between explication and enigma, a strip tease that adds layers with each article it removes, investigative and immersion reporting are amazing ways to harness the power of essay.

I wrote an article on gypsy dancers who shimmer under industrial track lighting, on solo guitarists who loose torrents of sweat into the worn grain of their acoustic guitars. There's sheet lightning from the dancers' sequins, gentle left-jabs to my chest from the pounding of congas. Here are singers and dancers from around the globe and around the corner, breaking into the industry or breaking out of the monotony of college classes. This is a land free of drum machines, where art runs rampant for the decidedly Romantic ideal that it exists merely for its own sake; Victorians are welcome, but to them the labor of hack poets on open mic night seems a bit frivolous. Not everyone gets paid for performing, or at least not well; the cover is scarcely ever more than a few dollars and a smile.

I wrote an article about the artists in the corners, like me, laptops hiding their twisted smiles, teeth parted under furrowed brows. Some of them venture to the stage to read poetry, others write papers or journals that few will ever read. All are welcome in this place, the artist and scientist, poet and pragmatist. Beer is on tap and wine calls from the racks in the mixed tongues of assorted origins...clicks and whoops from South African cabernet, a didgeridoo from the Australian merlot near the frozen

juice machine. No one goes hungry or thirsty for the price of a trip between tables to the bar...and a few dollars once there.

I wrote an article about the charm that mists from the exposed pipes overhead, condensation from the alchemy of emotion and experience into the gold of laughter among the patrons on leather couches. It's a place known to regulars who hover around their usual tables, as if entitled by seniority to claim the molds their bodies formed in the cushions during endless debates among friends. Here is a community, membership acknowledged by smiles and validated in the familiar looks from the wait staff.

I labeled this place, described the ten stairs that lead from the outside world into the subterranean haven. Not a nirvana, I wrote, for nirvana is the blissful absence of all things. Here, I contended, there exists the presence of all that can be. Birth in the sudden thumping of drums, joined in chorus by voices, pianos, guitars; death in the bartender's solemn decree of "last call," the highs and lows of experience the creamy buzz of conversation and the food in your hands. Sounds, sights, smells from the kitchen and table behind you, blend together inextricably to form the single entity that is...and then I named this place, giving in true journalistic style the address and telephone number that make it accessible to the world.

In Eden were kept, tightly guarded, the secrets of happiness and the love of the Christian God. When Adam took those last ten steps to the forbidden apple he threw wide to the world the doors of his paradise, and was forced from its protection. The knowledge shared with him by Eve and the infamous fruit was enlightenment, the force that destroyed his enchanted retreat. I held that apple, about to offer the gift of knowledge of this place to the world outside the gates. With simple words I plucked it from the tree, that instrument of simultaneous education and damnation, and realized a moment

soon enough that this fragile haven was not meant for a general population. We each discovered these hallowed grounds ourselves, a test of our merit we only recognize in hindsight.

I destroyed an article about a mystic place, and in its stead erected this riddle. If you appreciate art for its own sake, the earthen colors and spiritual communion of kindred spirits drawn inexplicably together like moths to one certain light in a city, you will find us. You may follow, without realizing it, the scent of poetry in the air or the warm tingle of music in your ear, and arrive at a table in a nondescript basement lounge. If you stumble across this rabbit hole, let your fantasy be your guide and your imagination fill in the answers...and for any further introduction, I'll be there, third table from the stage, left side, satisfied smile hidden behind a laptop.

Third Place Poetry Entry 2004

Being Devine

Brian Dye

As life passes by, we hear the voices screaming at us
Your parents, preacher, even the uncaring teacher
They all say, "do your best, do what is right, and follow the rules"

Your friends chime in "slack off, party, and do what is cool"
Not knowing who to hear, whether to follow or lead, what to do?

Your mind starts to spin; all you hear is "be the best"
Trying to be perfect but never living up to your own expectations
Looking around you see all the turmoil between all the nations
Not being able to change the world is growing ever so frustrating
As you stress and push at yourself all you do is end up hating

Examining myself today, all I can think to say:
"Push harder, try harder, never give up; *why, oh why can't I be the best*"

They say you can do anything you put your mind to
But they also say one can't be rich and still be saved
That one can't be a man of men and a man for men

I ask why if I can do anything then why can't it all be mine
Why, oh why, can't I be divine?

Third Place Prose Entry 2004

Intercept

Heather Gehlert

A door slams, and I look up from my homework.

"Fuck you!" she yells.

"Not again," I think.

"Not again," I think.

I rub my temples and look back down at my notebook.

$y=mx+b$. We are learning to graph in my eighth grade algebra class. My assignment is 2-32 even. Mr. Powers always gives us evens because the answers aren't in the back of the book, but I don't mind. I like math.

I'm given the coordinates (2,3) and (6,1). Oh, yes. The difference of y's over the difference of x's – glass shatters – and my slope (that's the "m" in the equation) must be negative two. Now I just need my y intercept, which is – "Fuck you!" he yells back.

Goddamnit. I wish my mom and stepdad wouldn't fight so loudly.

I roll my eyes, looking up at the ceiling then forward with a sigh. From my post on the living room couch I can see through the kitchen and right into the half-open double doors to their bedroom. The light from the ceiling fan illuminates my mom who is smashing some of my stepdad's plastic model cars. Those take a long time to put together ... I know because I helped.

Four. The y intercept is four. $b=4$ I write. Problem number 24. Only five more problems. Graph $y=1$. Is the line horizontal or vertical?

"You selfish bastard!"

The line is horizontal. That was an easy one. I wonder if Sean will call tonight.

"You only think of yourself!" yells my mom, thinking only of herself.

"You're both selfish," I think. I wish they would both grow up, but maybe they're too old for that. I close my algebra book, my pen inside of it to hold my place.

I walk toward their bedroom, pushing my way through the noise, the insults penetrating my then 5'3" 95-pound frame. I pause in the kitchen, dizzy and nauseous, and hold onto the counter with both hands for support, my elbows locked, my head hanging forward between my shoulders, my knees jelly.

At their bedroom I gently tap the left of the two half-open doors.

"Could you two argue a little more quietly?" I ask in a gentle voice. "I'm trying to do homework."

They look at me, silent. I am a stranger.

I turn back and make it as far as the stove before I hear another crash, probably another model car. Then footsteps and screaming. My mom is yelling so loudly her voice is breaking. Her words have become indecipherable – a thick blanket of noise. She runs after him as he grabs some Bud Light from the fridge.

Good, maybe he'll get drunk and shut up. I sit on the couch again. Number 26. The fight moves into the living room.

He breaks a beer bottle against the living room wall opposite me. Now the wallpaper will stain, I think to myself.

Number 28. The phone rings. I run to my bedroom to pick it up. It's Sean.

"Hi, sweetheart. Nothing, just finishing some algebra problems. Oh, maybe another half hour. Call you back? I love you too," I tell him.

I resume my post on the couch. Number 30. Broken glass, crushed knick-knacks and the smell of beer.

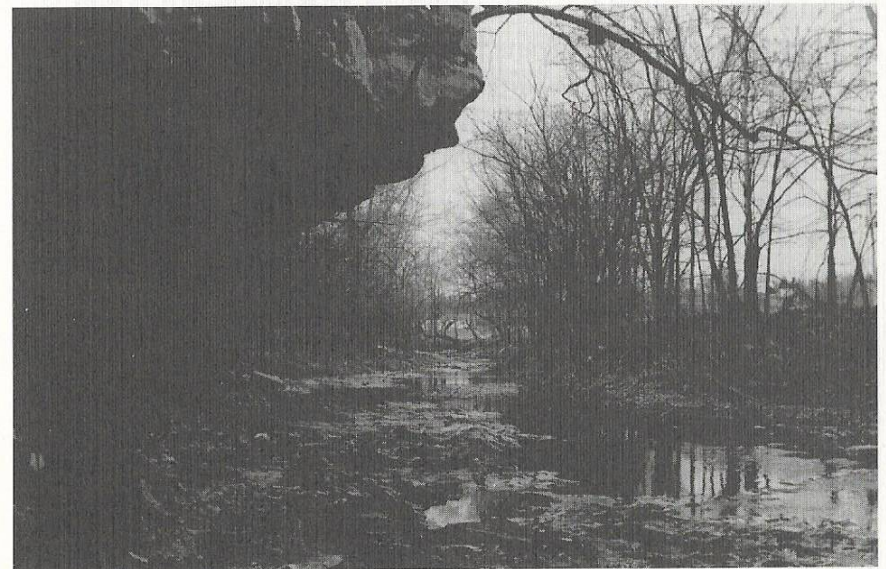
I wonder why my sister isn't home yet. TGIF will be on soon.

"Goodbye Heather," my stepdad says – the last words I'll ever hear from him. He slams the door.

"Bye," I say and wave mechanically without looking. Then silence. The first welcome sound in four years.

Number 32.

Third Place Graphics Entry 2004



Sarah Muenks

Affectionately Yours (an imperial son)

Shannon Kempf

You will have to excuse my candor America,
But mourning & remembrance are not my calling.
I'm not the networks.
I'm not the New York Times.
I'm not talk radio.
So isn't this the world you wanted America?
Collateral damage, the means justified by the ends?
Isn't this the world you wanted America?
Civilians dying as their city falls around them?
Isn't this the world you wanted America?
Soft targets and outsourced armies- the stuff of
 pragmatism gone astray?
Or were you just kidding in Panama, Nicaragua, Grenada,
 Cambodia, Vietnam....
Don't you mean what your gunships say in Palestine!
 Colombia!
What your weaponry exhorted in East Timor! Turkey!
Surely a democracy like you wouldn't lie.

Has it all just been in good fun America?
& the world has misinterpreted your shenanigans?

America, I don't hear you laughing anymore
as you tell your same tired jokes to the world:
Again to the "Afghan trap",
to wreck it some more.
And now in Baghdad
In answer to the Oil Addict's call:
"Fix! Fix! Fix!"
And the North Koreans & Iranians & Syrians on notice
 too-
"America- Soon In a City Near You"
But what does all your freedom sowing mean?
Such explosive seeds!

No one knows what to make of you America,
You're such a fickle charlatan.

It began early between you and I America.
When I was in grade school,
30,000 of my brothers and sisters died in Nicaragua,
And you didn't even mourn.
You said it was nothing to mention,
The President couldn't even recall the slow massacre
His baffled mind was great entertainment,
& for weeks I didn't sleep,
without checking the closet and beneath the bed
for the feared Sandinistas!
What fun we had, you and I
Playing Communists and Capitalists.

But now you're so serious America.
You have lost your sense of humor.
Tell me,
What happened on the Eleventh of September Two-
 Thousand and One?

Let's Go to the Movies

Katie Kramer

I had stripped down to my undergarments the night before, my last resort to getting a comfortable night's sleep. The top sheet and comforter of my single bed had already lost a battle with my legs and the linens found themselves in a heap on the floor, leaving only the fitted sheet clinging to my sticky, sweaty body. July's dense heat was difficult to brave without an air conditioner, and I often had to give way to many restless nights, coincidentally, in the "City that Never Sleeps".

Tonight would once again constitute the same nightly ritual, I thought, as I walked from my residence in lower Midtown to 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue. I watched steam rise from the sweltering pavement, blurring visions of taxis lining the sidewalks outside the Flatiron Building, while the stench of garbage penetrated dumpsters in the alleys of Broadway. Both were good indications that the temperature was not going to be dropping any time soon.

Venturing out into parts of the city other than my neighborhood was not usually something I did past dinnertime. I had been in Manhattan for a month and half, and although it was becoming more familiar to me each day, I was a naïve twenty year-old and the city could still be a bit foreign. Most of my weeknights were spent in my muggy room, reading manuscripts for my internship at a literary agency. As July approached, I realized that I just couldn't take it any longer. I decided that I was going to do something different this particular evening.

I found my search for a unique activity when I met my friends Cramer and Eagen for dinner.

"You should join us for the Monday night movie in Bryant Park. It's always a great time...definitely a summertime tradition," Cramer said, between bites of her pasta salad.

"Yes, come with us tonight," requested Eagen. "Andrew is going to meet us there too and I think he's bringing some snacks

for a little picnic." Andrew was Eagen's boyfriend. I always admired the two of them: Eagen in her strapless summer dresses and pearls, and Andrew in his seersucker pants – they always looked like they were ready for a jaunt in the Hamptons.

"Okay!" I said with great enthusiasm. I mean, why not? The night air would still prove to be somewhat stuffy, but perhaps a breeze could cool us off.

42nd and Fifth, behind the New York Public Library? Got it. I would be there right at 7:30.

After shuffling through the pages of a manuscript I had little interest in, I left the confines of my room and crossed over to Broadway, walked to 23rd Street where Fifth Avenue intersects Broadway at the Flatiron Building, and made my way uptown for another 19 blocks. The skies of Manhattan were a violet hue, twilight just beginning to grace the atmosphere. With every step I took, I could feel my jeans suck to my skin even more. They were like thirsty leeches, taking hold of my warm legs in the most uncomfortable way possible, indulging in the sweat that seeped from my pores. When I finally saw the antennae of the Empire State Building, I knew that I did not have much farther to trek. Even King Kong would find this weather intolerable, I imagined.

With a bottle of Perrier and a bag of Pepperidge Farm Milano cookies from the nearest bodega in hand, I meandered through the sea of people filling the lawn of Bryant Park. A massive "silver screen" rose above the crowd on the west end of the city-block-long park. How on earth could I find my friends?

My eyes scanned the scene: people laughing, people sprawled out on blankets reading, people chattering on cell phones, people carrying bottles of wine and loafs of bread from Balthazar, people playing cards. They're all waiting, I realized, for something in their lives. Perhaps some were waiting for a job interview, some for a lover, or some even waiting for salvation. I was waiting to one day be a true New Yorker. But for tonight, we were all waiting for the weekly movie in Bryant Park: a chance to lie under the stars and the skyscrapers, a chance to be with good friends, a chance to catch a breeze in the hot city night.

YOU ARE

Theo Esser

YOU ARE
the wind that carries the seed
YOU ARE
the water that fulfills its need
YOU ARE
the soil that gives it comfort
YOU ARE
the sun that gives it hope
YOU ARE
the world in which it lives
YOU ARE
the flower that grows within
YOU ARE
the joy the flower brings
YOU ARE
the T that fall, when the flower dies

E

A

R

S

BUT ALSO

YOU ARE
the pollen that carries new birth
A flower that will grow ten times better than the one before

YOU ARE

YOU ARE
the twinkle, in the sky, wished upon as day turns night

YOU ARE EVERYTHING

YOU ARE

Camping

Christy Kayser

Bonfire crackling
Night breeze creeping up my collar
Little toes curled up by the fire
Stars and eyes twinkling
Hearts in harmony
Our voices rise to the top of the pyre
Still night
Sprinkled with laughter
Sweet sounds in a crisp Autumn choir.

Life Becomes a Prison

Michael Rhodes

Brick by brick my prison is built
My feeble attempt to weather the storm of life
With each brick comes new hope and new promise
Waves crash upon the stones and try to consume me
How ignorant I am to think that I can stop the storm
The higher I build the stronger it becomes
I suddenly realize that I am building my own prison,
But faced against the storm I continue to build
Woe is the day the storm consumes me
Casting down my feeble walls and destroying all hope
Then is the day that reality must be met
Will I weather the storm?
Shall I live to build another prison?
Can I hope against all hope to bear this burden
Such is my life and such is the end

Missing California

Blair Leible

Can't stop thinking about the tall, graceful palm trees lining the
roads

Or the thick traffic creeping and crawling down the freeway;

Can't stop thinking about the wet sand squishing between my
toes

Or the ocean waves rolling, swelling, cresting, and climbing up
the shore;

Can't stop thinking about the gauzy, flowing fabrics found in all
the stores

Or the artsy beat of the music found in the middle of the streets;

Can't stop thinking about the misty ocean breeze filtering
through the air

Or the laid-back, carefree attitude permeating my very soul;

Can't stop thinking about California

Or how much I wish I was there.



Matt Quintero

Lasso The Jew *And Other Unintentionally Anti-Semitic Pastimes*

Dave Norman

In the eighth month of the year of our Lord two thousand, I sought refuge from the trials of self-sustained socialization by joining a fraternity. Under letters I'd previously considered merely geometric figures, I discovered for the first time what it is truly like to be "one of the guys." To be such a jolly stereotype, one must first be a guy, and second, have other guys to be one amongst. As an only child I lacked this latter requisite, and before my college years never really sought the company of a particular number of gents. That was fine; as was the turning point where I assumed the social position bemoaned by feminists, belittled by outsiders, and championed in teen movies: one of the guys, a frat boy in spirit, speech, and style.

Male children idolize male adults, often merely on the grounds that the adult is bigger and more powerful than they. Size and power, a natural pairing for males, are the benchmarks of leaders, champions, and other socially defined "winners." Children are taught to be winners, and figures such as police officers, astronauts, and firemen comprise the cannon of generic real-life heroes and role models. This hasn't changed much in the last few decades. Since September 11, 2001, firefighters fight terror as well as blazes, and children idolize the police in current television shows who behave so far beyond the bounds of law, order, and even moral decency, that real officers are torn between laughter and disgust at the caricatures. Even Hollywood astronauts now ride nuclear weapons safely away from Earth to spare mankind. Sure their exact portrayals changed over the years, but the cannon remains intact: Johnny wants to be a firefighter, Bobby wants to drive a police car, and the newly-empowered, prematurely self-aware, ball of pubescent rage behind red pigtails, Rachel, wants to be an astronaut.

Another common theme simultaneously uniting these children with each other and with their counterparts from schooldays past is the desire to be there *now*. To wake up wearing a badge or boots, to blink and be piloting an expensive porcelain missile into uncharted deep space. They want to grow up to be whomever, or whatever, they idolize (what college degree is necessary to be a Power Ranger?), but by and large they would skip the "growing up" portion of the equation to have the payoff immediately. They want, in short, to be adults.

The beautiful irony of this is, of course, in how the police Sergeant wishes to be a kid again while hauling his forty-something body painfully over the umpteenth barricade. He yearns desperately to have a teenage body again; if not to have his youth back completely. Plenty of adults are happy with who, and what, they are, despite the avalanche of whining bullshit sliding down the Microsoft Mountain into inboxes and televisions every day. Yet, most admit to longing at one time or another to have their youth back...as they pack a school lunch for a son or daughter who would give their piggy bank to grow up faster.

Here, in the buffer between adulthood and childhood, the doorstep to NASA or the police academy, is a little institution equally maligned and adored: college. Sandwiched between the carefree days of misspent youth and the shackled days of adult drudgery is the place of the fraternity, a four-year-haven for men-children to feel like adults and act like kids. Or conversely, for the overly serious among them, to still be children in the eyes of the world, and try their hand at a certain measure of adulthood. The two often sleep in the same bunked beds, one in clean pajamas and the other passed out drunk in whatever smelled clean the previous morning. It is an enchanted land behind the letters, one of opposites in constant brotherly struggle...home to many guys, who are just being "the guys."

An intrinsic dynamic of guys is the omnipresent, ever oppressive, and normally humorous, phenomenon of labeling. Men generally

shy away from calling each other by first name, preferring the less personal last name for salutations. In a house where forty males cohabitate, one can see the confusion if someone were to carelessly break protocol and yell "Hey Jon" into a crowd. At least three, possibly four, heads would perk up, with no guarantee that any were the particular "Jon" in question. But yell "Jackson!" and only one person would take note long enough to respond; and then, likely with a beleaguered "yeah" or a flippant profanity. Guys are like that. Yet Jackson is not a good enough name, nor label, to apply for long...not among "the guys." Some quality, some arbitrary fact or genetic predisposition must be seized upon, bastardized, and morphed into a moniker unique to that one particular soul. Because hey, you might end up with two Ryan Smiths in one house; we did.

In the case of Jackson, he was somewhere between one quarter, and one eighth, Hebrew. Perhaps his grandmother had only walked past a Synagogue one Friday, but in any event our dear friend was associated with the Jewish faith and the creative gears of our collective mind began slowly churning. Safety goggles are mandatory any time collective male gears begin churning, and often children for miles in any direction are in imminent danger; it is a widely accepted mathematical fact that the addition of males to a group diminishes the effective intellect of said congregation by a factor very near pi. Plus another male, minus 3.1 shares of intellect. Place the equation over alcohol or modify both sides of the equal sign with the inclusion of power tools, and the resulting product makes Chaos Theory look like a benign afternoon cloud. Perhaps applying this mathematical theorem will one day solve the Origin of Man question, unlock the secret of time travel, or create a coffee recipe that any gas station clerk can follow. When replacing "part Hebrew" for X and applying the Male Group Equation to the process, the nickname product was the astoundingly intellectual: "Jew." And so he came to be known, and referred to by one and all, ox and lamb and babes in mangers, as "Jew."

One member called Mr. and Mrs. Jackson over a holiday break looking for "Jew." They had no idea who the caller wanted.

Men have long followed this practice. In Indian tribes, "real" names were dispensed with altogether in favor of naming children straight-away what the males would likely come to call them soon enough anyway. Running Bear. Soars Like Eagle. Cries Like Girly Man. It was a beautifully simple system that saved the hassle and necessity of a group administering a nickname. If the kid smelled, it was likely to be given a smell-oriented name at birth, thus sealing its fate at play and in its society. Europeans attempted to mask male nature with names like Conan, but inevitably The Barbarian soon followed. Men are men; men in groups are even more so; this is another rule that transcends age. Put them together under one roof, with a surplus of beer and a deficit of personal space, and watch the antics with passing amusement. In this way, outsiders can view fraternities like ant farms.

In December of 2003 we found ourselves making merry on a random Monday evening, well past the curfew of even bums and most street criminals, milling aimlessly about our front yard. The occasion was the pending arrival of our Christmas tree, a tradition at least as old as the destroyed memory of our eldest "super-senior." To kill the down moments, which turned into four and a half hours, between dispatching camouflage-clad freshmen with a limb saw and a crudely drawn map and when they arrived with tree in tow, we readied the materials for Christmas Tree Installation. Three ropes, the heaviest duty that tearfully donated beer money could buy; two shovels for digging a hole in what used to be the flower berm in front of the house; a massive piece of plywood inexplicably dragged out by the sophomores; and beer. The ropes having no better use as we waited, it was a matter of moments before idle hands fastened loose ends into nooses and lassoes. Then the call went out: "let's lasso Jew!"

We have nothing against Jackson, really. He's a friend, a respected fraternity brother we mess with only as much as we torment anyone else among our ranks. Standing there in flip flops and a heavy coat, holding a beer and puffing vapor into the winter air like a locomotive belching steam, he was the picture of complacency. Until a nylon lasso dropped over his shoulders. The game was afoot, and soon the man was caught in a spider's web of lassoes and slip knots, wrapped up like a fly. It was harmless fun.

Yet technically, it was a hate crime.

This is how men play. In Africa they play Mumblipeg, a game eschewed by anyone dreaming of a career involving running. In South America, men either play or watch soccer, and in either case invariably riot. The Chinese invented gunpowder, which led to men sitting around for thousands of years wondering "what can I blow up with this?" Later Americans, Russians, Germans, and other men around the world sat about cradling firearms wondering if they could hit the can/tree/asshole across the street. Men play games that involve risk, with people they call offensive names. To conjugate a verb, this is, was, will be, will have been, is being, and has been the way men recreate for thousands of years. If history doesn't make something natural, what does?

Take the case of Richard Salat, beloved member of the Class of 2004. Born of a Dutch mother and Austrian father in a Pennsylvania hospital, raised in Singapore while attending a British school, Richard came to college speaking "bits of a lot of languages, but none of them well" in his own immortal words. I, a lone male, called him Richard. That was his name. When two other classmates were around him, Richard became Salat. An alumnus heard the story of his international origins, and changed Salat to "America," due in equal parts to the country Richard was going to college in, and to sheer irony. The same alum then shortened it to "merica," and this served quite well until the terrorist attacks of 2001, whereupon the collective conscious of fraternity house males turned to harassing him about being

foreign in a time when foreigners attacked our country. This, also, is natural male behavior among friends. Anyone outside of "the guys" would label it sociopathic, as they would call Lassoing The Jew an anti-semitic hate crime. But among friends, this is good humor...albeit obtuse.

On September 12th, 2001, 'merica was shortened to "Paki," short for "Pakistani," which was one nationality Richard's blood had nothing to do with. It was thus safe from truly offending him, and the humor of the irony enriched the nickname. It was further enriched in a picture taken of Paki with his head wrapped in a JC Penny Catalogue bath towel, brandishing two plastic pistols. This brings up another trait of males: we mock our enemies, and bond through this communal mockery. Again, this is normal, and military history is full of humorous tales of mockery and tomfoolery between kings, generals, and Gooks and White Devils. One man calling another man a name to incite anger is an instance of being an asshole. Many men attributing a nickname to an enemy, or often worse, a friend, is expected. This is generally mutual, and no one is particularly offended. Paki called Jackson Jew, and Jackson called Benjamin Young "Mormon" for roughly the same reasons as his own loosely-religious nickname.

Mormon was more than simply a nickname, though. Most nicknames are intrinsically linked to a label, and Ben's other nickname was "The House Diabetic." A classmate noted that during Ben's freshman year, there was a diabetic senior getting ready to graduate. The next year Ben moved into the fraternity house, and the former senior was gone. Thus, equilibrium was established: there was always one, never more, never less, diabetic in the house. Paki replaced a foreign senior who graduated, maintaining status quo on the foreigner count. We pointed this out. We indicated this in the nicknames, the jokes, and the general heckling which all "the guys" routinely subject each other to. This is normal, a complex behavior pattern ironically spawned from The Formula which breaks complex individual male minds down to the group-mentality of rabid chimpanzees.

Outsiders comment on our names, some taking offense when they hear one of us scream "Hey, Jew!" across the Hunter Activity Center. Jackson takes no offense, we intend no offense, yet others occasionally stick their noses in on the behalf of him, or the perceived-to-be-maligned Paki. The "towel head" jokes and picture are not funny to outsiders. Funny, those pictures were not meant for outsiders. Ben answers to Mormon and "Hey diabetic" in the fraternity house, and among his brothers. When outsiders call him as such, the humor is lost and the mood falls flat. They have not earned the right to do so; they are not "one of the guys."

This mentality shows on a massive scale, as Americans have no problem telling jokes about our president, lampooning him, even defacing and defaming his image in posters and pictures. But the second someone "over there" makes the same comments, or draws the same cartoons, it's offensive. "They" are not "one of the guys," and we take offense. We can call our friends Stinky and Beaver, but the second the wrong person screams Yankee Devil Dandy we're hovering our finger over the little red button. Men in all countries are like that, at least at the group level. This is as natural as ragging on the foreign kid any of us would give the shirt off our back to, or the Jew we'd just as soon hold a fundraiser to help through cancer as we'd lasso on the front yard. And we don't expect anyone else to understand; they're not one of the guys.

Chasing Squirrel

Andrew Prewitt

It was Sunday morning, and I was making the usual trip through town searching for my vehicle which, after the festivities of the night before, I had smartly abandoned. Driving intoxicated has landed too many drinking companions of mine behind bars, and also too many in the hospital. It was on this brisk January morning, while walking stupidly through the Beta parking lot, that I heard an awful screeching sound. Doggedly I searched for the sound's creator, expecting to find two squirrels fighting or chasing each other around. Instead, I was dismayed when my eyes fell upon a fluffy squirrel struggling futilely, dragging his limp hind legs behind him. It seems as though this squirrel had been in an accident of some kind, probably vehicle oriented, and was much the worse for wear. I watched this pitiful creature trying desperately to increase the distance between us, and a great sorrow swelled up in the pits of my chest. Animal lover that I am, but animal doctor am I not, I did not know how to handle the situation. So I handled it as any farm bred Missouri boy would do, I pulled off my T-shirt, put my forearms through the arm holes, and attempted to coax the animal into my makeshift squirrel sack. So I'm standing there in the below freezing weather, in a pair of worn out jeans, tevas (without socks), and no shirt. I must have been a scary site too, because that squirrel would have nothing to do with me.

Now, what I was going to do with this squirrel after I caught him is beside the point. But, it had something to do with a homey cage, a variety of nuts, and some rehab for those hind legs. The truth is, at this point, I really had not thought the entire thing out. Call it the a desire for success, but the only thing on my mind right then was to get that squirrel into that shirt.

So there I was, chasing a crippled squirrel behind the Beta house. You'd be surprised too, how fast a two legged squirrel can run. He'd made it to the grass behind the Phi Delt house before I had closed the distance between us enough to make a lunge. Now, looking back on it, lunging nakedly at a crippled and extremely frightened squirrel was probably not a very wise thing to do. But,

maybe it was the effect of the alcohol still circulating in my blood, because lunge at him is exactly what I did. I felt the crisp and icy grass on my bare chest, and I felt my hands clasp around the body of the squirrel. At the very instant my hands clutched the squirrel for the first time, his entire body convulsed in the most extraordinary way. The squirrel was underneath my shirt, and out of visibility to me, but I would wager my bottom dollar that, that squirrel inverted his spinal cord, did a complete flip-flop, and shot out of that shirt faster than a striped assed ape. Not only did he escape my grasp, but he doubled back on me and gave me the most horrendous lashing I have ever endured. My body was sprawled out on the grass, my arms were outstretched and tangled in the shirt, and my hands were open to attack. The squirrel sank his teeth into the meat of my left hand thumb, and I screamed like a little girl. My screeches were loud enough to deafen a bat, and the squirrel limped at light speed under a supply shed.

Upset and bleeding, I found my car behind the Sigma Chi house. The moral of this story is not only that you should beware of injured animals with sharp teeth, but also that even when you truly believe you are doing the right thing, you should step back and look at it from the other person's perspective, and I would have bit me too.

Being With You

Blaire Leible

being with you
felt like falling

falling off the edge of a cliff
onto sharp, jagged rocks

The Sorrows of Your Changing Face

Heather Gehlert

"That's one thing you'll never have to worry about, sweetie. Your mother and I will never get a divorce."

My dad smiles at me through the rear-view mirror. "Did you hear me, sweetie? I said your mother and I will never get a divorce."

I smile back at him and look between the red vinyl front seats of our new '88 Plymouth Turismo – the two-door sporty version – as my dad slides his hand over to the passenger's side and grips my mom's. Too many sunspots and wrinkles make his hand look old next to hers, betraying their age difference of eighteen years.

"Yes, daddy, I heard you."

Fourteen years and two divorces later, I sit in a restaurant booth across from him and my step mom, Gail. We always eat at Denny's when my dad passes through town on his way back home from the VA hospital after his bi-monthly check-up. I am a senior in college now, so this is one of the only times we see each other – for check-ups or for holidays.

"My PSA is only .001," he tells me. "Nine years, and the cancer hasn't come back."

"That's wonderful," I say, wanting more than anything to feel enthusiasm behind the words. But I can't, and the words fall flat, and his face drops as I speak them.

This routine has become more painful than usual as I try to appreciate our time together. I fight the urge to glance at my watch, the urge to focus in on "Baker Street" playing in the background, the urge to look anywhere but at him.

"What can I get you folks?" the waitress asks, her warmth and energy almost enough to distract us from the tiredness in her eyes.

Startled, dad looks up, eyebrows raised, one hand cupped over his right ear. He cranks his hearing aid, which whistles in rebellion even though it's the newest, smallest model.

"Go ahead, honey, tell the waitress what you want," my dad says to me as he reaches across the table and puts his hand on

mine. "We have our baby with us today," he tells the waitress, with a smile so big it smoothes the creases on his forehead. "Our pride and joy."

I look down at my menu, ashamed of my own embarrassment.

"I'll have the turkey club and a large milk."

My dad orders for himself and Gail.

"Give us the original Grand Slam, with an extra plate."

"Sausage or bacon?"

"Sausage."

"Eggs?"

"Scrambled, and use the egg-beater kind. The wife and I are trying to watch our cholesterol," he says, nudging Gail with a laugh.

"Smile, honey," my dad says to me. "It's a joke."

I eat my food slowly and concentrate – really concentrate – on the way the turkey, bacon and tomato taste. I think about the food and try to think loudly. I want to drown out the conversation. I want to be back in my dorm room, but dad's words break my concentration.

"It's good to see you eat," he says, and I know that he sees me as a child. To him, I am seven. To me, I'm 30. We're both wrong. I'm 21.

"Do you remember Bill Kenley?" he asks. "Our lawyer."

"Yes."

"He died last week. Actually it was suicide. Stood in the driveway in front of his office and shot himself in the head."

My stomach turns. Dad always talks about death.

"Anyway," he says, "the bank will be handling our trust fund directly now. That will be easier for you when we pass on. I think I've told you this, but you know that you and your sister will inherit the house."

I already know about the trust fund. My eyes don't even well up with tears anymore. He's not dying. He's just preparing me for his death.

"Of course," he says, "if I go first, Gail will live there until she goes, and vice versa. But ultimately, the house is for the two of you."

His words are as matter-of-fact as a business transaction. I grasp my left wrist with my right hand firmly over my watch. I twist it and try not to look at the time. Instead, I study his face. Smile lines give way to coffee- and tobacco-stained teeth; not even a vestige remains of the Henry Fonda smile I used to see in photo albums. He is 75 years old, but to me, he is already dead.

Too Soon

Connie Young

My heart skipped a beat
When the shrill piercing ring of the phone
Cut through the night air,
Like the screeching of tires
On slick pavement.

Then it fell from my chest
Into the void of my stomach
When the man's bleak voice told me
Your car lay smashed in the ditch
A mile from his home.

The hot tears welled up,
Blurring my vision
As the phone cried out once more,
This time from the hospital.

And as the nurse's words
Slowly materialized in my head,
Those tears, now tears of joy,
Sprinted down the lengths of my cheeks,
Plunging aimlessly into my lap.

You were going to be all right.

Mom Never Cried

Mary Poletti

6:30 on a hot, sticky August morning. I awoke to the sound of my mother's footsteps in my room. Most of my blankets had been kicked to the foot of the bed as I squirmed all night in hot discomfort, thinking too hard to fall asleep and feeling too warm to stay asleep. My eyes didn't want to open this early on a Saturday. They fluttered in protest against the hall light outside my open bedroom door.

She was still wearing her short, flowered summer nightgown, close-cropped hair damp from its salon-recommended daily washing in the sink, but she had already applied a full face of makeup. After thousands of mornings of watching her from the kitchen table as I sleepily gulped down a glass of icy milk, I was too accustomed to her morning rituals to find them strange anymore. But whenever I had last been awake at 6:30 in the morning, I had watched her for the last time.

Quietly, all business, she plugged my squat green bedside lamp into one of the archaic travel timers she placed on all our usual lights whenever our family left the house overnight. This required her to turn on the lamp for a moment to calibrate the timer. As I shielded my eyes from the light, she murmured an apology and a wakeup greeting whose words would be lost forever in the insanity of the day.

Straightening up, she turned to walk out of the room, but she stopped halfway, standing at the foot of my bed, dappled in shadow by the oblique light issuing forth from the hallway. I couldn't see the tears in her eyes, but I could hear them in her voice.

"I'm not ready for this," she confessed, her voice stumbling and breaking.

Mom never cried.

At that moment, she seemed to shrink in her nightgown, no longer the stalwart, unemotional rock of our family, just a sad old lady giving away her firstborn child. She was leading me by the hand into the first day of preschool. She was standing at the gate as I boarded a plane alone for the first time, sporting bad

skin, worse bangs, and a mouthful of expensive plastic. She was watching me walk across the stage in a cap and gown and high-heeled gold sandals to shake the principal's hand. She was sending me off to a new life that would not necessarily include her.

Without another word, she composed herself and left me to my empty room, awake at 6:30 on a Saturday morning. My legs swung over the side of my disheveled, too-warm bed as I sat in stunned silence, too tired to control the tears spilling down my own cheeks. I could only remember seeing Mom cry sad tears twice: once when my grandmother died nine years ago, once during an epic fight with my sister on the night of her confirmation. Both times, I had been scared out of my mind.

Much like right now.

All summer, I had thought I was ready. I had spent the past three months working at a cheerfully rundown pizza place and in the dusty textbook storeroom of my high school, discovering the wonders of punk rock and late-night cruising, trading wisecracks and kisses with a cute coworker at the restaurant. Buzzing around my small world in my dented Saturn, I had reveled in a newfound independence and confidence, ready for whatever the future saw fit to throw at me.

None of that, however, had ultimately done a damn thing to prepare me for this morning. Nothing could have readied me for the eerie finality of seeing my life boxed up in the back of my father's car. I hated packing. Nothing could have steeled my nerves to watch my mother cry at the foot of my bed. And Mom never cried.

6:30 on a hot, sticky August morning. Today I was going away to college.

Nikki J

Clint Watts

So, she thought it wouldn't matter,
Still, the pain explodes, emotional spatter,
Scattered all across what we once were.
It's strange now, the smallest things,
Rearrange the rings a promise brings.
Forever's not a letter, It's better,
Counterintuitive physical debtor,
Whether, I or She or We or Them,
Again, the wind of sin seems kin.
Follow my lead Babe, it's not too far,
To the bar, the rare and wonderous infidelity scar.
I hope you live it down,
That crown, the sound,
Of an awful indignant clown pound found,
Right outside my door, or what's more,
Outside my peripheral vision,
Out of extension,
Out of the reach of Love's eternal detention.
I fell too far, too fast,
Even now I wish it would last,
Past, the terror and sorrow of a lonely tomorrow.
Stay! You gave me the choice to pass or to play.
Stay! I carried you then , now don't go away.
Stay! I've given my all, and would any day.
Stay!

To an Anonymous Woman in St. Louis

Nathan Kempf

Fuck you
Laura Park



Anonymous

Sanko Sushi

Alexandra Heath

Striding through the aisles of the Japanese supermarket, I try futilely to look like I know what I'm doing. I was here yesterday, and clung to my Japanese-speaking roommate like a leech, but today I know the routine. I just need lunch. Some canned drinks catch my attention on the way through the store, and I scan them for any English words, finding sweet coffee, milk-tea, oolong tea, and the mysterious pale "Calpis" or "Pocari Sweat". Two small bottles of tea go into my tan plastic basket, and I move on.

I ignore the bags of rice. I have no idea how to use the rice cookers provided for students at the dorms.

The 100 yen aisle looks tempting. There are bags of chips and rice puffs with names like "Wasabeef" and "Real Taste!" bearing pictures of cows, shrimp, or corn, on one side, and chocolate bars, bags of colorful hard candy, and bright unidentified bags on the other side of the aisle. I haven't yet learned a single character of Japanese in my two and a half days in Japan. How do people go through life illiterate? I pick a bag of corn soup-flavored rice puffs and two candy bars.

After passing through the meat, fish, frozen entrees, green tea-flavored ice cream, and styrofoam bowls of instant noodles, I make it to the ready-to-eat packaged food. There are green beans with sesame seeds, potato salad, and thinly sliced purple octopus with cucumbers in one section. A table is filled with fried meat, fish, and vegetables called "tempura". Another has full trays of a variety of food, including rice, fried meat, boiled and pickled vegetables, and rolls of scrambled egg, called "bento".

Yesterday I bought my first bento, and was sick of rice by the end of it. I hadn't seen the sushi, but the seaweed-wrapped rolls caught my eye today, on the other side of the small bread section.

In America, one of my favorite foods is sushi. Whenever I'm feeling rich, I go to the grocery store to buy a tray of California Rolls, a Full Moon Combo, or even Dragon Rolls for lunch. Sesame seed-covered sticky white rice is spread over the

dark seaweed covering the rice, cucumber, avocado, and imitation crab rolled up inside. It's a gently exotic mix of seafood and fresh vegetables that I fell in love with after tasting it at a friend's birthday party.

This sushi looks different, though. There is no rice to hide the dark green seaweed. There are more varieties than I had ever seen before, and nothing looks like what I buy in America. Best of all, it's much cheaper! I can afford to get almost anything for less than the price of my American sushi, but my mom's frugality has already taken hold. I won't allow myself anything over 200 yen.

After much deliberation, a plastic tray of nine rolls of shrimp sushi looks well worth its 160 yen. I will not notice the mayonnaise slathered into it until I get back to my dormitory. I stick it into my basket along with some melon bread and a chocolate-filled pastry for breakfast and head to the line of cash registers.

The cashier turns to me and smiles after an awkward moment at the sight of my pale face and hair.

"Irasshaimase!" She greets me with a smile that is a bit too wide to be natural. I set my basket on the counter and watch helplessly as she scans the barcodes and sets the food into another basket.

"Sen nihyaku nijuu kyūuen desu."

The cash register says "1229" so I take out 2000 yen and set it on the tray by the register. Yesterday I made the mistake of handing the money directly to the cashier, who took it with the greatest embarrassment. I watch carefully as she counts out the change and hands it to me with the receipt. We both know that she could charge me too much and I would never know the difference. The silver, copper, and aluminum coins are shoved blindly into my purse before I stuff my food into the plastic bags provided, set my basket on a stack of them, and walk towards the door, framed by drink and cigarette vending machines.

On my way out, I pass four other Americans. We share the eager smile of familiarity as we pass, and they enter the store discussing the bastardization of American food in Japan.

Daydream in Color

Christy Kayser

Long nights in the Pub Room
As the deadline begins to fall
Black ink blurring; commas and letters
But what's behind it all?

The restrictions of words:
Newspapers cramp my style –
My red ink destroys creations –
Conformity in a pile.

Black and white format
Black and white thought
Just a waste of colors
All this time spent for naught.

For I'd much rather be reading
On a blanket, outside
Where the blues of the heaven
And the green grass collide

Or maybe picking chrysanthemums
Their blossoms so bright
Reaching up, up, and higher
Towards the yellow sunlight.

But the papers are piling,
More to read before bed
So I turn my attention
To what's written in red.

In an Hour of Time

Mandy Kay

In an hour of time;
Life can trun around.
In an hour of time;
Minutes can drag,
And seconds can fly.
In an hour of time;
Clouds may hide the brightest of suns.
In an hour of time;
The world can fall,
But moments later can be built again.
In an hour of time;
This hour may seem like ten years ago,
Or only ten minutes from now.
In an hour of time;
The lives of each and everyone
Can be a world of difference from now to then



Anonymous

Life in Kisses

Darcy O'Hanlon

Kisses are a vital part of the romantic process of courting. Some kisses are good, some kisses are bad, and some leave you without your breath, but one thing remains true: you will always remember your kisses.

It was hot and moist with the Texas sun pounding away the recent rain's moisture. The playground smelled like wet chalky stones, and drying metal benches with hints of childish sweat wafting in as the wind blew. I was trying to find a dry place to sit during the play hour, as I had on a pretty new dress and didn't want to soil it, when a hand grabbed mine! With lightening speed I was yanked down behind the bench I had been inspecting and was looking eye-to-eye, green to brown, with a little boy in the grade ahead of me. He began moving closer to my face and put his play-dough smelling fingers on my cheek all the while puckering his lips in the Hollywood fashion. I could only watch in wonderment and amusement as his lips approached mine, not fully comprehending what was going to happen. When his scrunched lips finally hit my trembling ones, his eyes flew open as my eyes flew shut! I felt as though I were dying, not knowing what to do with my hands, my face, or my lips, I merely held fast and allowed him to pucker and press his mouth to mine over and over and over again. After what felt like the entire hour, I finally broke free, wiped my mouth clean, and ran to the jungle gym oblivious of my dress, only caring about getting away from the third grade bully.

'Twinkle, Twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are. Like a diamond in the sky...' I never finished my song, he cut me off. Don't get me wrong he cut me off in a wonderful way; he just suddenly kissed me. He had been my best friend's older brother for forever, our irritated 'babysitter' for as long as I could remember, and my one and only crush of 5 years. Then that fateful night we were star gazing for my ninth grade astronomy class project and destiny began to take control. That kiss is the

best one I've ever had to date. The way he caught me by surprise was classic, the way he tilted my face up into his and covered my mouth with his, warmly and lovingly. His tongue made light patterns on my lips before finally filling my mouth. I still remember the way he ended the kiss, it's how he ended all of our kisses from then on until six years later; he delicately sucked on my upper lip with his mouth before moving to nibble on the corners of my mouth. He never failed to leave me breathless and putty in his hands. DAMMIT I LOVE THAT MAN!

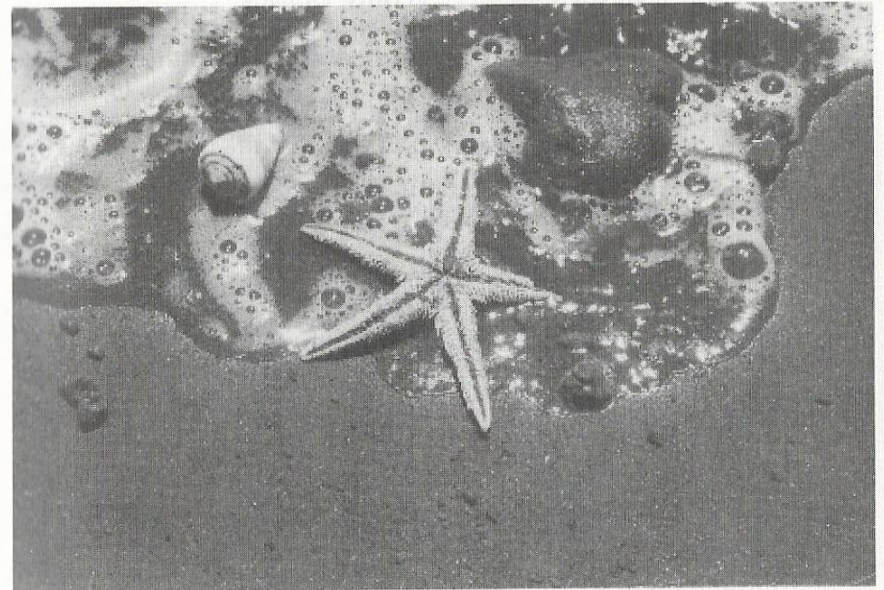
"Please don't leave, you complete me," he said, as I inwardly rolled my eyes at the movie line he was trying to convince me with. I sighed and cupped his face with my hands and peered into his soul. I whispered to him that I loved him and leaving him was hurting me as much as it was him, yet it had to be done. I explained how we had once been perfect for each other, but that we both had changed and no longer wanted the same things from life. We would only get in each other's way, we wouldn't be assets to one another the way we had once been. The tears that welled up in his eyes as I pressed the ring of eternity back into his palm were heart wrenching as was the intention I read in his eyes. I saw the descent of his mouth to mine and knew that this would be the most painful kiss I would ever experience. The light brush of his lips was chaste, and then the mouths and passion took over. They seemed to sense that this would be the last time they would ever meet and they needed to take their fill. It tasted salty; I realized later it was from our tears mingling together to create a lasting impression of bittersweet longing. Ending that kiss was the hardest thing I've ever done, even more so than ending him.

Choices

Mandy Kay Grim

There is a road before you, a road behind you and one to the side. You turn around slowly considering each road carefully. One weaves through trees; sunlight filtering through a canopy of leaves. Another winds through tall, meadow-like grass; the blue sky above. The third is cobblestone with a fence on either side. You begin to turn faster. soon you are spinning our of control, the choice is too hard to make. They all look safe, they all look inviting, they all seemingly lead to what you want. How do you choose? A walk through the woods enjoying nature? Or an adventure in the playground of grass? Or a stroll down the paved path of civilization? Where is the harm? Then you notice a little, tiny path, overgrown and dark; but its end is in view; the destination is clear. Abruptly the spinning stops. Now is the time to make your choice. The woods, the meadow, civilization, or the dark? Then you wake up and it is all over.

No matter what choices you make, everyone must go home at the end of the day and look at themselves. The choices you make reflect you. What do you want others to see?



Anonymous

Michael's Star, Asher

Mandy Kay

Here I start my story
It's not romantic, gothic, or gory.
It is my version of the Exodus;
The real live Exodus of my people.
Some say it was made by us
And is a tale taller than the tallest steeple.
But this story is our truest bit of history,
England's proudest since chivalry.
In the end there is only victory,
For those who fought with bravery.

This magnificent farewell to bondage
Begins on an ordinary day in May,
When we left our little cage
To start a brand new day.
It was the year of 1544.
During the reign of Henry the 8th.
When Lord Lancaster brought Michael to our door,
On that cloudy day, May, the 28th.
Just an ordinary serf like you and I,
No different than the clouds in the sky.

Now as you may know,
The life of a serf is not glorious.
We harvest, glean and grow,
But we are not anyone to take serious.
Right from the start,
Michael was different.
But he needed a change of heart,
Because Lord Lancaster isn't tolerant,
Of serfs who whisper mutiny,
In the bondman's community.

But Michael kept on trying,
And finally got a group together.

Who would train to be terrifying
And free the serf society forever.
These men and women worked the fields by day,
And under Michael's careful instruction,
The night, perfect strategies baked in clay.
Strategies that were geared toward destruction.
Michael was a lord himself;
But he taught the serfs the value of one's self.

By campfire light, before a night of struggles
Michael would tell tales of a young god.
Who hated the unfortunate fate of his mortals.
He wandered and slept with his feet always shod.
Because as a mortal defect,
His feet he must eternally protect.
He traveled where his humankind grieved,
And their suffering he relieved.
Our young Asher serves his destiny
Spending eternity in the service of humanity.

As the training and planning continued,
The dream they pursued.
The work and pain was their ticket,
To the freedom offered past the thicket.
As the work got harder, and their exercises more demanding
The followers of Michael noticed his stability.
While working, planning exercising, or commanding,
His stamina was unending.
Soon the plans were coming along
And they worked, full of joy and song.

Then one night the warning came.
Tomorrow, when the hour was the same,
they would strike at full force,
Steal and destroy sheep, cow, dog, and horse.
Then with the enemy isolated,
The determination and desire of freedom would be demonstrated.

They would isolate the noble family,
Without their awareness at dawn.
And hold onto them idle,
As vulnerable as a pawn.

The plans were carried out, and the manor surrounded;
The final attack was sounded.
Lord Lancaster was more than willing to grant their freedom,
In exchange for the release of their home.
But this was not good enough,
To satisfy the pain, caused by their lives, ever so rough.
They held them there for three days.
And taunted them with their selfish ways.
But on that final day, Michael, performed a ceremony,
Promising the noble family everlasting Harmony.

With their freedom granted, they began to search,
With Michael in the lead,
For a land where they might have freedom of work and church.
Where they might learn to plant, add, and read.
But on the way, an ambush had been laid.
And Michael was killed in that spontaneous raid.
The terrible sorrow that followed,
Left the new freemen empty and hollowed.
The passion for freedom, they knew,
Was all a part of Michael, honest and true.

But late one night, as dark as can be,
I left my father's tent, the stars I wanted to see.
And suddenly from the darkened sky there shone,

A light fit only for a throne.
And in the midst that glorious light,
Was Michael, what a beautiful sight.
His immortality as evident as the sun,
Was there to redeem him, for he had won.

His fate had been sealed he said.
I must free my people, die and bring myself from the dead.

Michael then explained that he was Asher,
Son of Leanner, cursed mother of fate.
his mother's sin caused him to live this violent cycle,
But the deeds of his father, The Great Oracle,
Gave him the strength to regenerate his breath,
And trick the god of death.
With that Michael left us,
The end of our great Exodus.
For others he must free,
From the fate, his mother set on you and me.

So this is my story
My people's mythical history.
The land where Asher left our community,
Has become, the gypsy society.
Every 28th of May,
We celebrate all day.
The ordinary way,
Michael, Asher to all, came to us that day.
And the darkest night of every year,
Shines Michael's star, bright and clear.

4th Degree Burn

James Dawson

Hawkeye Police Dept.

Suspect Interrogation

Case file AV492-813 Date 10.27.03

Suspect: Clyde Hampton



Sarah Muenks

"Well, I guess it really started when I 'as a kid. Five or six, about. Mom used to make chili for us, but she didn't like it too meaty. She never cared for meat, always more of a vegetable person, so she put in a lot of beans but kept out a lot of the meat. I liked her chili, which I remember eating first at about five, and never thought much about it.

"Dad took me to a diner when we went to Sioux Falls to see family, 'cause he didn't think we'd like much of the food at Aunt May's, and he ordered me a bowl of chili. Well it didn't taste a thing like mom's. It had more meat, not many beans, and this... kinda... well, full flavor to it that got me. But what I 'member most about it, it was spicy. They must've put Tabasco in it, more Tabasco than tomato sauce, 'cause it kicked me square in the face, like a punch or somethin'.

"Anyway, I got to likin' chili more, but mom's was never good enough, not like she made it, after that. I got her to buy me some Tabasco, and made that brown chili red with all the sauce I put in. It was good, made me sweat like. Always have liked spicy things since, chili, eggs, I even put them little neon green pepper things on my sandwich and whatnot. Good stuff.

"So today I get the urge for some chili, right, about the time my route takes me past Frank's General. So I park the dump in two spots in the lot and run inside to get some peppers and beans, I've got meat an' all. After work, I get in my own truck and go home to make a big mess a chili for the next day or two. Ain't no problem to bring chili to lunch, in one of 'em plastic tubs my last

girl left in my kitchen when she moved out. They're microwave safe an' all.

"I got the chili goin', and went to add peppers. In all my experiences, the only peppers to put in chili without ruinin' the taste are these little red ones, look kinda like a big thumb with a stem and such. Habaneros. They don't have much seeds, right? So I cut two a 'em up and pick the pieces up and such, puttin' 'em in the pot with my fingers. Like I'd always done, nice 'n easy.

"Now this whole time, I'd been drinking milk, 'cause it went bad the day before but still smelled and tasted good 'n all, so I finished it off while I cooked. That's the only thing to treat a pepper burn, right? Milk. And bread, if you eat it slowly. But the burn is what I like, why else put peppers there at all..."

Officer Larry Horn
Interview, 10/28/03

"I've been an officer in Hawkeye for on about fifteen and a half years, roughly. We don't see much action, which is good for the citizens. Dull, but that goes with a lot of city jobs. Moments of panic and action, but they're separated by days of uttin' nothin'.

"Last night I got this call, on my cell phone, 'cause a lot of people know me, instead of through dispatch like they should have, that there's a dog on the loose 'round about 8th and Nichols, barking up a storm and disturbing Alice Greniger's bird watching. Now Alice isn't one to pass an opportunity to complain, but she's not without necessity sometimes, and we don't have any animal control specialists. We share ambulances with Bennett County ya know, hard enough to get that, much less animal folk. Oh well, it was nice out, so I drove on over to catch it.

"There's a gas station at the corner, across the street from Alice's house that her husband built back when Langweg was mayor and city jobs actually paid well. Or so my daddy told me. She was just Alice in the white house by the stop light to us then. Apparently that dog done ran right through her back yard a yappin' like the devil and scarin' away some rare somethin' or other, so she told me when I walked around to her back porch. She pointed across Nichols to the gas station, sayin' that's where the dog ran off to.

"Fine, I'll take a look I told her, and walked across the intersection. Sure enough, there was some barkin' behind that old station, like the dog found a rabbit or something. I walked around the corner past their detached bathroom that's been busted for a year, and came up around the big cigarette sign on the fence. You betcha that dog was there alright, and hell if he wasn't carryin' on and such like the dickens. Can't say I blame him, it was damn confusing for even me..."

Neda Hampton
Email sent to Vern Trigg, Oct. 29, '03

Vern,
I got the most distressing news last night from Clyde. He is due in court tomorrow, but released for the time on his own recognizance. Seems the police and he had a little misunderstanding, but I don't see what he did wrong. Bless him, he doesn't make sense all the time, but he's got a good heart you know, not like the criminals the police should be locking up.

Remember that time in the '90s when Clyde got his job and we had a BBQ, and you and Rose came over and brought that rack of ribs? Remember how Clyde loved your special sauce, but still dumped all those accursed pepper flakes on his portion? Well, you know he likes the spicy foods, has since we went to Sioux Falls when he was seven, and it seems like this was his downfall.

Everyone has an Achilles' tendon, and his are those little peppers he cooks with.

He says those habaneros are the hottest peppers he can find around these parts, and that the police spray uses chemicals that come from such things. I told him time and again that he doesn't need to be eating anything the police use to spray criminals with, but he always just laughed. Not now, I suspect.

Let me be straight, he had a bit of an accident with them the other night, of a gentle nature. You see, when he got done chopping those little things...

Dillon Paulson
Witness Testimony
Hawkeye Municipal Court
10-31-03

"...Okay. Dillon Paulson, 341 Terrace Ranch, Hawkeye. South Dakota. I'm sixteen years old sir. I work at Casey's gas station on Nichols street, we're open twenty four hours but I only work evenings after school. Yes, Hawkeye Senior sir, I'm on the show rodeo team in the spring.

"Last Monday? I remember Clyde coming in, he had this desperate kinda look about him, like he was bein' chased or somethin'. Asked about our bathroom, I told him it was broken. He bought a gallon of milk, yes, I remember that. The date was all smudged off, but it was fresh. We only sell fresh milk, your honor, and beer and soda.

"He was wearing this t-shirt, gray with something on it, and jeans with the top button undone. I remember ringin' up his sale and makin' fun of him for the whole button thing, but he seemed like he was somewhere else, didn't even stick around to get his

change. He just ran out the door before I could give him the receipt. Weird, but he does drive those big trucks, and my pappy always...yeah your honor, sorry.

"So a minute later Officer Horn rolls up across the street, to Alice's place, and then comes walkin' over this a way. I haven't got a beef with her, and haven't papered her house in a while, so I had no idea why Larry was walking towards the store an' me. But he went to the left, same direction as Clyde a minute before, like he was looking for someone or somethin'..."

Hawkeye Police Dept.
Suspect Interrogation
(tape continued from side 1)

"So I'm done an' cleaning up an' every little thing, when I have to pee. I go to the bathroom and pee, and it doesn't hit me at first. These things take time, like how you eat two or three spoons of chili 'fore you start burnin' inside. Well I finished up and washed my hands a'terwards, but I'd done the damage already then. Not but three minutes later I was cleanin' up the spilt sauce an' all, when my penis starts burnin'.

"It was the capsicum in the peppers, same as'n you use to spray them drug kids with. My penis burned like it's on fire, like when you pee and it burns but on the outside. Pepper's never meant to be used like that, an' I guess the habanero juice on my fingers was just 'nough to do the trick on me. Whoa, it burned, and there's not much you can do then, the damage's been done. But ya can't just let it burn like that, not there, so I took a shower right quick. Water only spreads the burn in your mouth, and it sure does work same for the rest of you too.

"By now it was most uncomfortable thing e'er, and not much I could do about it, so I go to the refrigerator for some milk, right,

to soak it in. But the milk 'as all by then. I don't know how good bread would be in this particular, so I threw my pants an' shirts on an' drove fast as e'er to the gas station for a gallon a milk. It's only two blocks or so, and I'm guessin' 'cause a later that I left my door open a bit when I left.

"Dillon, that Paulson kid, was workin' the counter there and got I guess quite a fright from seein' me run in like that, but I got the milk and just handed him four dollars 'fore I ran outside. There really was no time to drive back, I was almost cryin' 'cause it burned so bad, like a chemical burn, eh. They're bathroom's busted, been for years, so I run 'round back the store an' cut the top off that jug with my knife..."

Officer Larry Horn

Interview, 10/28/03

"...I've heard of the man from Wyandotte, in Oklahoma, caught indiscrete like with a pumpkin one night, but I've never seen the kind of perversion that was goin' on back of that store. I saw the back of this guy's shirt, a gray t-shirt I immediately was suspicious of on account of it being too cold out for t-shirts this time of year. The dog was running between his legs, lapping something off the ground and a carrying on. The man, Clyde Hampton as it turned out later, had his hands in front of his body where I couldn't see 'em, so I drew my gun and called out to him. In all my time in Hawkeye, I never drew my gun more than twenty seven times, more or less, but this was just a might suspicious for the back of a convenience store.

"I called out to Clyde turn around boy, and sure enough I saw his muscles tense and head snap up. He turned around, holding this milk jug in his hands, top cut off and..."

Neda Hampton

Email sent to Vern Trigg, Oct. 29, '03

...so he tells me, this is on the phone from jail mind you, that Otto had run through a neighbor's yard and she'd called the police on account of the disturbance. That's how the officer wound up coming around the back of that store, and must have had quite a fright. Clyde said he heard the officer yell, and so he turned around slowly, still soaking himself in the milk while Otto barked and carried on. I hoped that the officer would laugh so hard he'd forget to press charges, but obviously he isn't keen on milk offenders.

I asked him on the phone, I said well, did you at least get the burning to stop, and he said that it did until he dropped that gallon right on poor Otto's hind. Then the burning came back from the breeze and all. I just don't know what to make of this Vern, Clyde's never been to jail before...

Hawkeye Police Dept.

Suspect Interrogation

(tape continued from side 1)

"An' Officer Horn ordered me to fix my pants, which I did, 'cept for the big stain on the front and runnin' down my leg. That didn't bother me any, but the breeze whippin' 'cross there before, while we was standin' there starin' at each other, that was uncomfortable as all. Cold air, kind' like the shower water, right, brings the burning back.

"Otto was fine, the gallon was mostly spent from when I cut it open by the time I had to drop it. Po' critter was right under the jug, an' ya gotta do what a man with a gun says, eh. But Officer Horn was nice 'bout Otto, let him come in the back of the car

with me. He dropped Otto off at my place, on account of jails
being for people and not dogs ya see, an' told me my door was
standin' wide open. 'xplains that.

"So that's, in a nut shell like, 'bout how I got here. Ain't no crime a
man's gotta put out a burn, ya know. 4th degree like."

Alex Davies

When the day seem so long
That sunrises and sunsets no longer reach my eyes view
The only peace that I have to shorten these days

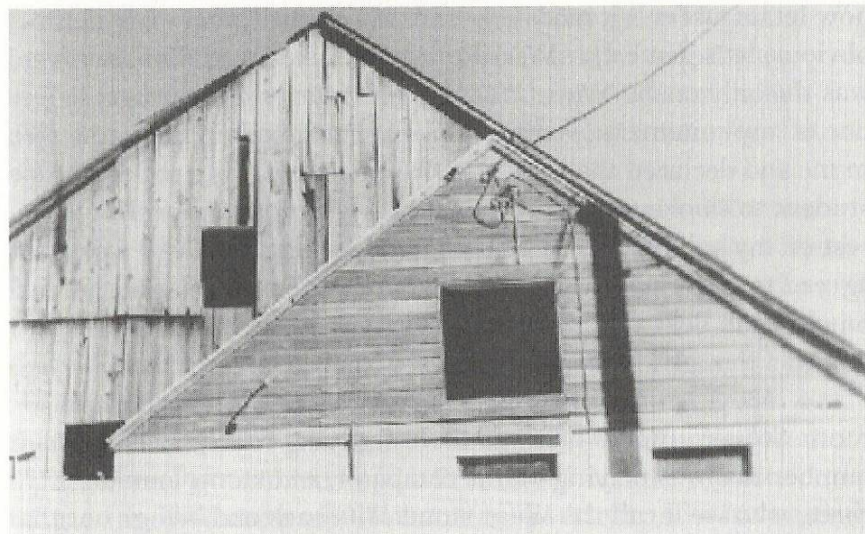
Is the hope that your hand will find it's way to mine
Through the sea of mischievous hatred that seems to burden my
days.

So often in my dreams you find your way to me
And your touch brings warmth to my frozen heart.

In reality your touch seems to be all too late
For my lips have not even ripened nineteen years
And already my core seems to have rotted away.

Ah, but those dreams, they're made of things that I live for
Those things that add glow to the unbearable darkness that
surrounds me

It is those dreams that keep me near to you
Away from the sea of lost souls that surrounds me.



Leigh Kellmann

Why I Stopped Smoking Pot: An Argument Neither For Nor Against Marijuana

Anonymous

The first and last time I have actually got stoned smoking weed occurred my freshman year of college. Because I do not wish to give my school bad press, after all I'm sure I'm the only one who has ever tried illegal drugs in my college, I will refrain from giving the name of the institution that I attended. So for now let us just call it nameless-minster; no wait, that's a little obvious; let's just call it West College. So like I said; I'm sure I was the only one at West College that had ever done drugs; so one of my suitemates, we'll call him stoner number one, came up to me and declared that it was my responsibility as a college student to smoke weed with him and his friends, who were the rest of my suitemates. So like the good college student I was, I agreed to do it, but only after my finals were over; after all Smokey the Bear says something about fires, but when I was stoned I thought I was about finals.

Moving on, so the big night arrives and I go into their room. Stoner number one was there studying for class, and stoner number two was playing on his computer, and stoner number three, who we'll call the silent stoner, sits back and brings out the weed. He packed the bowl tight and I learned many things; like how to inhale correctly; or proper pot passing etiquette; or that your eyes get so tight you can't see the cool colors that are flashing in front of your eyes. And stone number one taught me the greatest secret of them all: why stoners do so well in school. After smoking weed with us, he began to read a page for his test, then he reread it, not because he was intensively studying it, but because he had forgotten that he had read it; thus the great secret was revealed. And after I sat and watched silent stoner and stoner number two battle each other in some Tetris-like game on two different computers for an hour, I realized that I was very messed up.

Now the night we chose to do this was the night of West College's famous midnight breakfast, usually held at eleven o'clock, and I agreed to go with them to the breakfast so they could stop me if I went crazy, or at least they could laugh and take pictures; I'm not really sure what would have happened. We had one hour before the meal; so I went to my room and decided to write something to see what I would write when I was stoned; after all there were many famous writers who did drugs or drank booze before writing and their work is now studied in schools like West College. So I turned on my computer and began writing. Initially I thought I was going to write about the midnight breakfast with I was by now lusting after in an I've-got-the-munchies-bad kind of way, but instead I started down a much different path. Now this is where the night took a turn for the worst.

While most people who get stoned become mellow and calm, like the good-natured hippie, or philosophical and creative, like the smokes-a-lot Socrates; hell, I've even seen people who are completely weird who act completely normal when stoned. On that night I discovered that I am a very different person when I am stoned; so different that I have yet to meet a person who acts the way I did when I was stoned. On that fateful drug-induced night, when I got stoned for the first time, I created my own religion and became a cult leader. Most people by now have either stopped reading, are now astonished, or are perhaps stoned themselves and find this humorous, but those people obviously are not from West College, because, as I've already explained, I'm the only one at West College who has ever smoked weed. What follows is the paragraph that I wrote that night; please read it with the understanding that I was completely out of my head and replaced by an evil cult leader persona when I wrote this seemingly plausible idea of a religion; and further know that there is no such cult for you to join.

The universe is a vast array of gases and compounds, what if we were the only ones? Alone in a dead universe; are we to repopulate the systems with man?

Man is an evil race destined to kill itself unless we change our ways. That is no way to rejuvenate the universe. Man simply eats up all of the resources in an area and then moves on. If nothing else I might say that man has been on all planets in this system and destroyed each and then moved on. Imagine ending each world and evolving to move on to a new planet, lay dormant and slowly re-evolve until all the resources are gone. People think of living as a one-person base; we live and then we die. And we go on to whatever thing your religion believes in. But think of living on an eon basis, the cycle of life for a fly goes from egg to worm to fly to dead. Imagine if it took eons to do this, but instead of just one fly, many had to live through the egg cycle before they evolved into a race of worms, and eons later they slowly evolved into flies which go and lay eggs and start more of their race elsewhere, but from the original point of evolution. In that sense the race is a living thing that changes instead of just one individual. Now take that and apply it here. Our entire race goes through the same thing, we were something, perhaps eggs lying dormant in the ground, then we as a race became monkeys, after many years we became primitive man, but in there somewhere laid the missing link, the Sasquatch or Yeti. Then we slowly became what we are today, and perhaps, as we deplete our supplies here, we will evolve into a creature capable of space transportation and we, as a race not as individuals, we will begin our race anew on another planet that is suitable at the original evolutionary step. In this case you can see that our race is one living whole thing, and each individual just a part of the grander scheme or change and evolution, thus what we call a lifetime is meaningless. A lifetime to us in one individual's life, yet to the larger scale it is eons, the completion of a full cycle and rebirth on to another world is a lifetime. We become god and watch over our creation that we made in our image for years. Just Imagine.

And after I created my own belief system, I turned on Scooby-Doo and finally understood why they kept chasing ghosts that turn out to be humans in disguise; it's because they have hope that someday they will catch the dream they are chasing, they are America, or at least that's what I came up with when I was stoned. Later on we went to the midnight breakfast and I ate a lot of sausage, which now tasted like marijuana to me, and then I went to bed without incident.

Now based on this first trial of marijuana, I have found that it is just not right for me; in fact it is down right career-changing for me. Now I'm not saying that marijuana is a bad thing, in fact I know some people who are better off stoned, and I'm not saying that marijuana is a good thing, insert anti-drug campaign slogan here; I'm just saying that you have to be careful with it. I know that I can't smoke marijuana on a regular basis, or I might become the next Ralien leader or, worse yet, I might become the next President Bush. So please be careful and look out for your friends; if they start talking about sacrificing baby goats to their elder God or telling you of this cool new religion they just read about created by a stoner; do your civil duty and get them off weed right away. You never know, you might just have saved your nation from another door to door religion.

The Visitor

James Dawson

Below the beat of big city life pulses a counter current of decline, the diametric opposite which balances the excesses of the successful. Where proud brick edifices once heralded the boom of business now rest the huddled forms of men as broken as the windows of the buildings around them. They rest in pill-bug positions, shielded from the elements by yesterday's wedding engagements and full-color fall dress ads. "Larry Barnhart Presumed Dead; Authorities Give Up Search," reads the headline tucked around one figure's neck.

Chilled evening air charges through a shattered second-story window, blitzing over a piece of mangled cardboard and rolling unhindered across a coffee-stained weather forecast to raise the hair on a sleeping man's neck. The breeze penetrates the briar patch atop his head, disturbing him just enough to elicit a snort and twitch. He wakes immediately, keeping his eyes closed against the widening shadows about him on the floor; when nature is your alarm clock, there is no snooze button.

A few minutes of quasi-consciousness pass while the man's eyes continue to search a fading dreamscape for some lost personal effect. He lurches and shudders, shaking off the encroaching cold as he sheds the gossip columns and horoscope blanket that did not quite suffice to warm him. He walks the streets at night to keep warm, sleeping in the sunspots marked on the floors of abandoned buildings during the day. Unlike the forms around him that were recently deposited by their failing legs and broken hearts, which pumped more chemicals than plasma, he rose in the evenings and preferred movement to sentiency. Every step he takes shows a pride born of experiences unknown to himself, and foreign to his brethren in the gutter.

With a shove overly forceful for the job he pushes himself erect almost entirely with his arms. The effect stimulates his heart, a moment of dizziness and haze a small price to pay for completely waking up in one simple move. His feet take him across the floor with a clip clap of old wingtips, the clap coming



Bold

The Beauty of Nature
The life choices we make;
Our quick decisions
and that which stands out.

Ty Portell

from a heel worn thin to the insole on the unrelenting concrete streets. Fading light heralds morning for the nocturnal.

The street he exits onto is familiar to him; there is the feel of the concrete, all too hard through the heel of his right shoe, and the clank-clanging in the parking garage on the corner. McArthur's Park Bakery is closed for business, but passing by he sees the shadows of men beginning the preparation for the midnight baking their job requires; they turned him down two weeks ago, even though their schedule fits perfectly with his nocturnal one. It was a loss; money buys taxi fare, and the ovens were warm.

So he walks, tonight, like the night before, and the night surely to come when he fails again. Half an hour to Neidmor Ave., where the old hockey stadium used to stand, and then only fifteen minutes quick-walk to Overland Heights. Tonight was the night for the Upper East Side, the last place in Overland he had to canvass. A guard is there who likes cream cheese donuts; at the thought, he cast a glance behind him at McArthur's and wondered if they would open their doors to sell just one day-old cream cheese donut. He walked on, feeling the emptiness of the pockets in his tattered slacks. Why he wore slacks instead of jeans, a more appropriate armor against the flack in the streets, is elusive.

Equally mysterious, he ponders now as he usually ponders on his way to a new neighborhood, is the importance of the hockey stadium. Last month, or so he recalled the hazy timeline, he saw a hockey game on a television in the display window at a second hand store. The experience only reiterated his distaste for the sport, a "pointless waste of time second only to basketball," he had commented to a passerby. So why, and it is this point exactly which troubles him so, does he seem to care about the vacant lot where the old arena used to be? Why, even, can he remember watching that game in the window, or the curve of the concrete arches that used to support the roof of the stadium, when he dislikes the sport? His eyes fog with fright and anger, a cocktail with equal mixture as well of the acute embarrassment one can only feel when they let themselves down; he realizes, now

only two blocks away from Neidmor Ave., that he cannot remember where he slept last week, but he can remember a stadium he never liked, for a sport he cared for even less. He turns right, the road rising on its asphalt climb to Overland Heights.

He speaks to the others in the alley on occasion; it is hard to avoid speaking with one's defacto brothers. Each had a story sadder than the other, and a vise threatening to expunge from their memories even these fables of their identity. Charles F. is, and those addressing him are reprimanded should they ever refer to his identity in the past-tense, a secret agent for the government. Charles talks for hours about his secret missions to anyone who cares to listen, but becomes violently private when social workers ask him what the F. stands for. Others are less colorful, the kind of depraved souls once loved by someone; now they are shunned by even each other, the only creatures which deign to be their associates being the rats that nibble their hair at night.

This was not a world for a man in tattered slacks and once-polished wingtips. This is not a world for any man in America, he reasoned every night as he walked away. One trip, one street, one house, out of a city full of streets and houses; one sign, even one face of the many who bustled along the sidewalk, was what he searched for. His dreams are haunted by voices he cannot identify, coming from the shadows that obscure a dreamscape that he almost, but barely does not, recognize. All too real, these dreams echoed the haze he sought to dispel with sounds and smells, the fog over his past that was dissipated at off times by strains of music from passing cars. A dog reminded him last week of a similar creature in his past, a mutt that he could remember loving intensely; but he routinely failed to conjure a picture of it. He fixated on this, and other small touchstones, never able to see a broader picture of his past. There were many glimpses, many that he could only remember the existence of; the fog chased him down every street, enveloping his sleeping mind every morning that he lay down for a sun-warmed nap.

He thinks of the cars, the clusters of businessmen and sidewalk café tables cluttered with other people's wives, the mass

of humanity on the sidewalks in the daytime, and wonders if anyone is seeking him even as he searches for them. The fourth finger on his left hand is bare, and no tan line suggests that there was recently, or ever, a ring there. But of the others who were surely in his life, why has one not yet found him? The possibility that they look in the wrong areas saddens him, and so he thinks more often that his diurnal sleep schedule must surely preclude contact with the people who knew him...whoever they were. When a face on a sidewalk just begins to grow familiar, it always disappears hurriedly into a lounge or club.

Swirling thoughts of smells, dogs, music, the elements he sees and touches as keys floating in his mind, searching for the right lock, ricochet through his consciousness; at the least, they keep him awake as his body protests the abnormal sleeping habit. Streets hold a special draw to him, and sometimes he thinks he recognizes the curve of a sidewalk or habit of cars to park a certain way. Other times, it is the ornamental statuary in the front yard of a brick ranch style house with three trees that attracts his attention. He was almost picked up in one just like that, but he saw flashing lights coming down the street in time; how long ago he could not begin to discern.

Only a few hundred yards away from the decorative brick and iron mouth of Overland Heights Dr., he glances left across four lanes of light traffic. Dartmore. There was a two-story house there, too, that intrigued him. It was special in the way the mailbox was crooked just enough to suggest it had not made it on the to-do list ahead of repainting a peeling shutter. He would certainly paint the shutter before straightening his mailbox, and so that night he peered through the window at their entertainment center. Then, their kitchen, and he saw the grapevine-imprinted dishes stacked high in the sink. No, grapevine dishes are not his style; so he moved on.

Breaking and entering is a crime. There are some things that even men who lose their memories will always know, like math and how to speak, laws and the proverbial "how to ride a bicycle." It is truly frustrating to not remember where you went the night before, or if you have children...and where they would

go looking for you...and yet recall the Monroe Doctrine you learned about in children's school. So he only opens the doors that are unlocked (still a crime), and when he knows that no one will notice him entering (illegal, but less risky). Late night; backdoors; while the owners are asleep upstairs. This is when he walks freely around homes until satisfied that his lips never graced the pipe by the easy chair, and it was not his son or daughter asleep on the couch in front of him with the TV on. Then he would leave, and no one would be the wiser.

Overland Heights is a fancy neighborhood, the kind with a guard shack on the main drive and a sports car in every three-bay garage. The guard, as he recalled on the street earlier, likes cream cheese donuts. The guard, who eats them by the bagful, has never noticed the homeless man in bedraggled business clothing climb low branches near the ornamental brick fence and swing onto the golf-course quality lawns. The guard, who loves donuts and has never noticed the homeless man, shares a common jaw line and brow with the bedraggled figure swinging now on a low branch, over the decorative brick fence.

His hands, callused from such employment repeatedly, released the branch and deposited him upon grass far softer than the floors he is accustomed to sleeping on. He rolls once, leading with his shoulder, to soften the impact force on his middle-aged ankles; healthcare is not easy to come by for the non-identities on the streets.

Again, though he does not recognize what should by now be familiar, he stumbles quickly through this side yard and onto the avenue a few hundred yards behind the guardhouse. The street is well lit, but the guard never looks out the back windows of his shack; and never sees the homeless figure emerge from the shadows to walk quickly down the tree lined sidewalks.

Overland Heights Dr. bisects the guarded community, the more-well-off on the western side, the even-more-well-off on the east, and it is to the shadowed doorways and darkened windows to the east that the homeless man looks tonight. Yards with four trees do not interest him, and Japanese gardens between driveways and front doors are equally unfamiliar and tasteless to

his focused mind. Yet a few boast three trees, and a handful have crooked mailboxes despite the community maintenance code. It is illegal to pass a school bus that is boarding or disembarking children, he recalls; it is a \$50 fine payable to the Board Of Neighbors for not having the yard properly edged after mowing. Laws come readily from the locked corridors of his memory, if names and pictures do not. He walks on, turning right onto the thread of a recollection destroyed in the fires of his subconscious and passing, in the process, three trees.

A new street spreads before him, a new avenue with something old about it; a garage bares a concrete arch on the southern side of the street, attached to a ranch style house lodging four residents and a weekend guest in far greater luxury than he will face in the warehouses the next morning. And somehow, he knows this. The car with a pleasing license plate is a clue that a teenager, most likely a girl judging by the bumper stickers taped to the rear window, is home after curfew; surely she would park such an expensive car in the empty second bay of the garage, if the noise would not betray her arrival. Can it be this car that tells him of the guests, the occupants? The car-less bay next to the concrete arch is a smaller version of the ones over the concession stands at the former hockey arena. The shutters are an ugly shade of brown, one he would never paint on his own home, and so he keeps walking without missing a step. Swimming invisibly on the ink-lake of shadow below the lilac bush he passes is the tattered remains of a leather heel, dog chew marks on the black wedge.

Time marches steadily on, hour hands on bell towers making greater progress than his feet make over the sidewalk; he is distracted by decorative rocks that surely he would buy, only to be disheartened to see through a crack in the curtains of a garage window the hulking form of an SUV, or motorcycle, or any other vehicle he would never vilify his own garage with. Two doors, both to houses on the north face of this street, are unlocked this night; three paces within the arch of one he left a small clump of dirt which chose that exact moment in time to dislodge from his wingtip, a souvenir of his harsh fall to earth on this side of the

community wall. But the chandelier in the entryway was wrong, and he left without further investigation. No one detected his intrusion, and he apologizes under his breath to the sleeping denizens of 241 DeChamp as he backed out of their foyer.

Morning is only one inch from the short hand of the clocks on mantels throughout Overland Heights, and his search for the evening has netted at this point a few spikes in heartbeat and one close call with a previously sleeping dog...but no key to the deadbolt locking his past away. A ranch style house in a pleasing position to the rear, and off center, of its lot beckons the weary traveler with an invite to lean against his choice of three trees in the front yard. He crosses the street expectantly, his mind burning with the eerie glow of *deja vu*.

Yes, he whispers to himself, two bays on a garage like this are all a man ever needs. No concrete arches or three-pole flag gardens reminiscent of the former stadium mar the flowing lines of the art-deco façade. He passes a mailbox, slightly crooked, near the mouth of the driveway; shadows conceal the subdued white letters "Barnhart" on its side. The entryway has a peculiarly thick glass screen door on well maintained hinges; it echoes a muffled thud when he taps it with his knuckles, but does not move. There is a window to the right of the door, a larger one on the left, and the steady blue glow backlighting the curtains that betrays a blank television's ready servitude in the living room. He strains for a glimpse of the throw rug before the hearth or to discern the pattern on the matching love seat and chair within; at least, he somehow expects to see such forms through the shield of darkness and curtain. Foiled by interior decorating, he skulks carefully quiet to the back yard.

No swing set, check; no gaudy plastic fencing around the modest swimming pool, a bonus. This house has potential, flashes in bold headline-type behind his eyes. It gives way to the vision, through the backdoor window, of a spotless kitchen in black and silver. There is a wine rack he can barely make out suspended by cables above the sink. He tests the door: unlocked, as were many others in the community, and as he himself would leave such a barricade. Without a sound the door swings open, and he tiptoes

with the exactness of a surgeon across the tile floor, leaving the door open behind him; quick escapes are best executed with open doors.

The wine in the dangling rack glows like iridescent honey from streetlamp light streaming through a high window; Pinot Grigio, a fruit wine, and an entire row below it of various, and less glowing, Reisling. Nothing worth drinking alone, and nothing worth serving with the meat dishes he fantasizes about on the streets when he passes the aromatic stove vents behind the city's Italian restaurants. This rack needs Bordelino.

The décor of the adjacent living room holds a certain sweet mystery, as of a teddy bear seen in a home movie by a man too old to remember his youth. Though the radiant blue screen in the entertainment center lowers the acuteness of his eyes, he can tell where the carpet and tile meet without being able to see the lines of beige and white clashing in the shadows. Even closing his eyes to this experience of voyeurism does not interfere with his navigation through the kitchen, into the living room, and around the loveseat to face the pile of magazines on the nearside of the couch. He opens his eyes, and stretching before him is not the family room of a stranger, but an exact manifestation of a map burning in the back of his mind's eye. His physical eyes are engaged as well, and now painfully so! The room explodes in white, and he turns his face to the floor.

"Get out old man!" a voice bellows with a practiced treble that terrifies the stranger. "Get out, get out!" The room strikes him, the map destroyed by the magnificent light; new recollections burn into the soft clay of his short-term memory with the piercing rays from three lamps and a red leather sofa. "Get out!"

He runs from the room, through the kitchen, guided around the furniture by instinct magnified through sheer panic. Behind him thunders the voice, "Get out, get out this is not your house, leave!" Soft ground is destroyed by the thunder from his wingtips. His fingers are thrown furiously through the air, arms swinging as pistons to goad his speed faster. This home obviously does not welcome him, his memories already being over-written

by the terror of the light and voice. The street unwinds before him like the string of a yo-yo thrown skyward by a furious child. Before his legs begin to ache he is at the guardhouse, stooping to run under the yellow-checkered arm across the road. Inside, the guard glances up from the want ads and is barely stirred by the retreating tail of a homeless man fleeing the neighborhood in terror; he returns to the blurb for an abortion clinic guard before the clip-clap of hurried flight even disappears around the corner.

Inside the ranch style house with three trees and a now-locked backdoor, the lamps click off and the final echoes of annoyed rebuke are absorbed in the cashmere blanket on the sofa. The man of the house walks a short distance to the master bedroom. He retraces the impressions of ten toes in the plush carpet, trail markers leading him back to the warmth of still-unfamiliar sheets. "Honey," says the woman in bed, "what was that?"

"Nothing dear," comes his soft reply. "Just uncle Larry again."

I Am a Poet

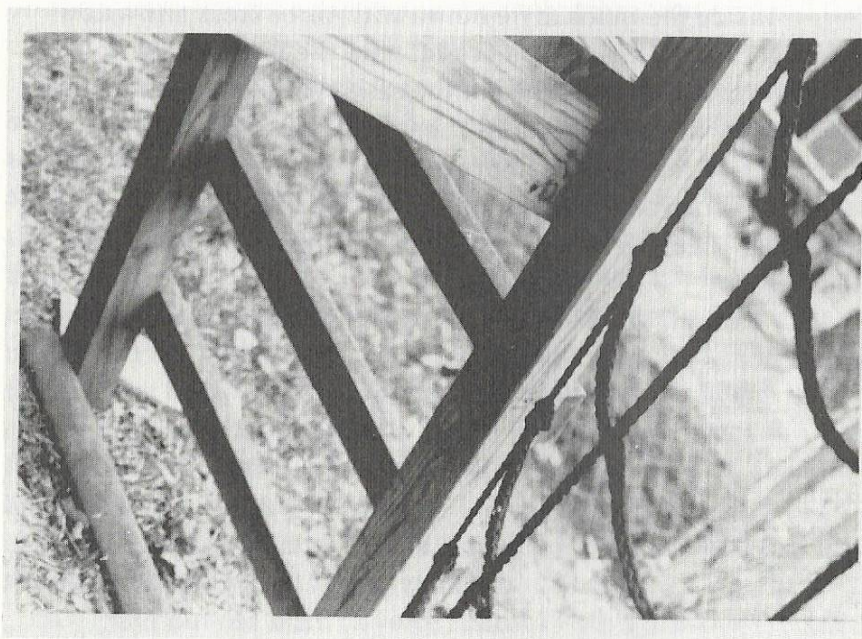
Vincent Spezzo

I am a poet
My job is to write
And to read
And to be an observer of
Life's every movement
I work real hard,
But I don't get paid
Because I am a poet

I am a poet
I'm sensitive and romantic
I'm caring and an incredible lover
Because I am poetic
And if you believe that
Then my number is 573-592-5024
That number again is 573-592-5024
Why aren't you writing that down?

I am a poet
I'm knowledgeable
And wise
All knowing at times
Observant
And I can teach you
Many things about the universe
Especially when I'm drunk

I am a poet
Like all artists I need a muse
Someone artistic
And beautiful
And female
And if you come to my house
You can pose nude for me
And I'll write a poem about it



Emily Henry

I'm a poet
So yeah,
I live in my parents' basement
I have milk crates for chairs
And a big wooden spool
For a coffee table
And I can't afford a TV
Cause I'm not a musician

I am a poet
So by definition I'm a starving artist
I crave good wine and French cheese
But I can only afford
Boones and Kraft singles
So if you can spare a dollar or two
I'll buy some good beer
And write a poem about you

I am a poet
Did I mention that I'm poor?
But I'm not in it for the money
I have a higher calling
A greater purpose
I do this to get laid
But it's not working
Cause I still live in my parents' basement

I am a poet
One of a dying breed
Selflessly devoting my life
To writing poetry
For people I'll never meet
And never asking for anything in return
So take pity on me
And that number again was 573-592-5024