

Border art by Kenny Musko

"Watch out for flying garbonzo beans"



Archives Collection
Paul L. Manderino Library
Florida State College

The John Wayne never shared a sleeping bag with J. Edgar Hoover Issue

The Most Glorious Game of All

by Todd Flowers
Art by Kenny Musko

Nobody liked Deanie much. Each summer his mother, the beautician, removed the perm that she had given him for school by shaving his head, and each summer the scars that had been hiding under his soot-colored hair reminded me that he was accident-prone and didn't give a damn about himself or anybody else. To me, Deanie's summertime baldness was as intimidating as his school-time perm was funny. I never teased him though, and Deanie saved his browbeating for those less likely to retaliate.

Like members of the Bloods and the Crips, we kept out of each other's way, on edge when the other was in earshot and careful not to test his willingness to defend his turf. The difference between us was that Deanie stole from houses and cussed at teachers and failed the fifth grade, whereas occasional hostility towards classmates from my end made everyone think that I was as vexatious.

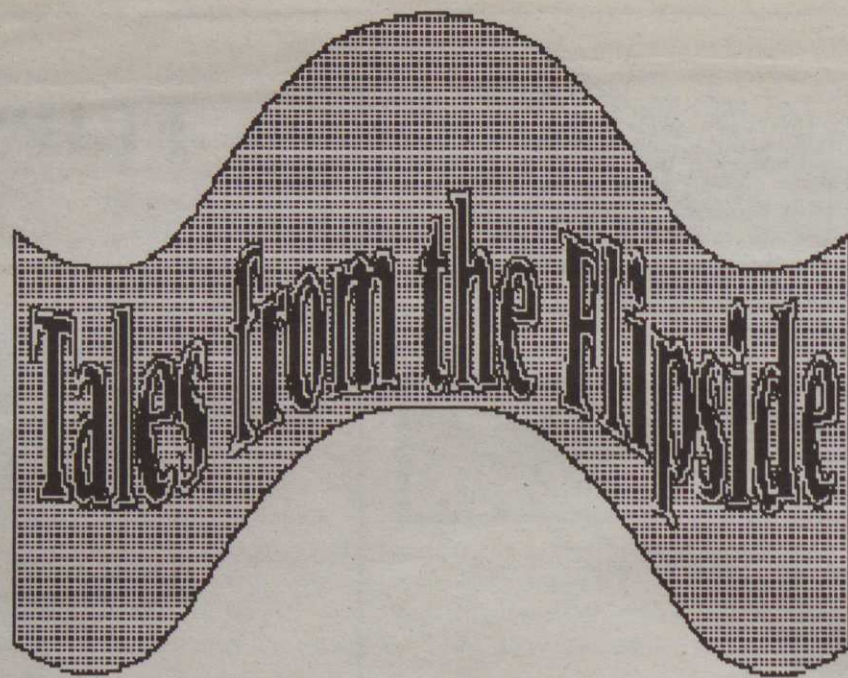
Dean's team was stacked with twelve-year-old boys and, including Deanie, three of them hit four or more home runs during the course of the season. The last time we faced them, Dean played catcher. Weighed down with the tools of ignorance, he never lifted the soles of his black Pro-Keds high-tops more than an eighth of an inch from the ground and the particles of dirt that hadn't cohered to the rest of the sunbaked, concrete-like infield disseminated and formed a tan cloud that encompassed the bottom half of his legs until he reached his post behind the

dish. Prior to squatting into position, he stretched the elastic bands that secured the mask to his face, spat, and let the mask snap back into place. The padding on the inside of the protective gear stretched his face outward and made him look like a disgruntled Mongolian and the white of his eyes enhanced his upright football-shaped irises, which could only be seen fully from straight on.

Fortunately, Tiger ace Frenchie Mitchell pitched against the Dodgers earlier that week and because we weren't a threat to their playoff bid and had already forfeited twice (once because of the fifteen run rule and once because we couldn't amass nine players) Deanie's name appeared in the official score book in the third batter's slot with a "P" next to his name. Although I'd never faced him, I'd seen him pitch and I knew that his fast ball didn't have enough gas to jeopardize my .483 batting average.

From the first base side dugout, I watched the Tigers take the field, and on his way to the hill, Dean raised the right side of his mouth while snorting, stuck out his curled tongue, and released a mass of mucous that retained its shape even after it met the ground midway between first base and home plate.

I had seen him, with the same irreverence, spit on Billy Hawkins in the gym during lunch recess. The humiliated boy made no effort to immediately remove the hanging secretion from his left eyelash and lunged



The chicken and the block head

When it comes to one night stands in this day and age, with the threat of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, it is a good idea to be chicken. It could turn out to be fatal. However, as one Spaniard found out it could also be fatal to have a one night stand with a chicken. The man decided to opt for a night of romantic bestiality, and reassociate the relationship between chicken and pecking. As he was pecking away at the chicken in a cave near an open face rock he apparently got too caught up in the moment and dislodged a bolder which crushed them both. At least the chicken won't have to live with the emotional scars left by the Spaniard.

And in this corner...

He dresses like a woman, powders his nose and wears pink nail polish. What separates this transvestite from the "norm?" He's a 140 lb. Thai kickboxer and fights like a demon. However, Pirinya Kaibusaba burst into tears when he was ordered to strip in front of reporters and cameramen for a weigh-in before a bout in Bangkok, Thailand. In response, Lumpini stadium officials eventually showed mercy and allowed Kaibusaba to wear his black jockey shorts, due to his huge success and command of sellout crowds.

Kaibusaba says he isn't afraid of facial injuries. "If I was afraid about my face, I wouldn't fight," he said.

He added he likes the "strange feeling" he gets in the ring.

Sharpshooters

In Annapolis, Md., during Gregory Johnson's 32nd birthday celebration, his cousin Darwin Derwood Coates, 21, tucked a .22-caliber handgun into the waistband of his pants and accidentally shot himself in the groin. As guests assisted Coates, Johnson took the gun and placed it in the most convenient place he could find, which was the waistband of his own pants. The gun fired again, shooting Johnson in the buttocks. Both men were hospitalized.

At least they weren't reptiles

Dr. Rachel L. Chin sent a letter to the New England Journal of Medicine describing a U. S. woman's infection from botfly larvae that she picked up in Peru. The patient was inspecting spots on her legs when she saw things start to wiggle out. Eventually, seven maturing bugs, which had been gestating in the infection, emerged before she sought medical help.

LOVE THY BROTHER

When a 4-month-old Colombian baby went into surgery to have a tumor removed from his abdomen, the surgeons discovered that the suspected tumor was actually the baby's twin. His doctors said that the rare condition is known as "fetus in fetus" is a condition where one twin is absorbed by the other inside the mother's womb.

The six-inch long embryo removed from the midriff of the four-month-old had survived by attaching itself to a vein within the baby's intestines. Doctors said that the embryo had feet, a slightly deformed skull, a poorly defined face, back and genitals; and although its hair was growing its heart wasn't beating.

A pediatric nurse said that the 4-month-old was recovering well after relieving a blood transfusion.

Bite your tongue

Surgeons in China recently removed two extra tongues from the mouth of a 32-year-old peasant farmer. The man, who was born with only one tongue grew a second at the age of five and a third a few years later. The strange operation enabled the man to eat, drink and speak normally for the first time in 27 years.

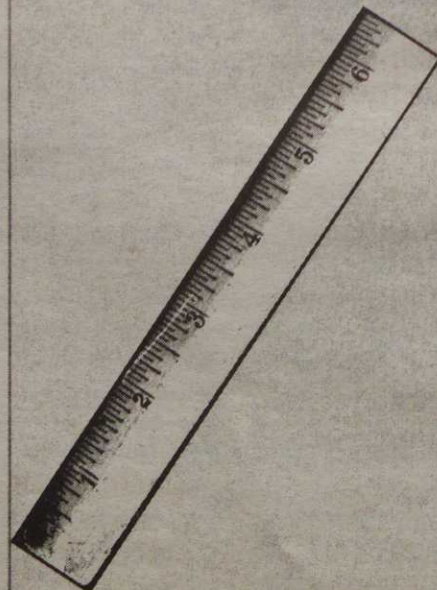
Why no cat snot?

Among the exhibits at the Impulse to Collect show at San Jose State University in February were Chris Daubert's "Chromatic extrusions rodenta" (rats' droppings following their ingestion of some of his oil paints), Maryly Snow's collection of 696 toothbrushes, and Bob Rasmussen's collection of items containing red X's. Among the exhibits rejected were a huge mass of dryer lint, an assortment of cat snot on slides, and a 15-year collection of umbilical cords. Organizer Theta Belcher, when asked what makes a real collector replied, "They take it that one step too far."

A matter of only inches

Stretching the envelope...

A 42-year-old man from Copenhagen is the proud owner of the "World's Largest Penis Extension". Doctor Joern Ege Siana said that a combination of surgery and post surgery stretching had lengthened the patient's flaccid penis by a length of 5.7 inches, or from 1.77 inches to 7.48 inches in total length. The surgery was the most successful penis extension on record; surpassing the average extension of two to 2.7 inches by more than 170%. Both the patient and his wife were unavailable for comment.



Put one foot in front of the other.

The Postal Service in White Plains, N.Y. fired letter carrier Martha Cherry for taking too long to complete her rounds. Ms. Cherry's supervisor wrote that she was dismissed because, "At each step, the heel of your leading foot did not pass the toe of your trailing foot by more than one inch. As a result, you required 13 minutes longer than your demonstrated ability to deliver mail to this section of your route."

The Sound
The Query

Dear Flipside,

We are on to you. The killings must stop! You printed a letter from Curt Kobain within a week he had shot himself; you listed Timothy Leary in a list of people for whom you were thankful then he went to the great psychedelic afterlife; next you thanked INXS only to have a band member hang himself, finally the whole Milli Vanilli thing (although we aren't sure if we should thank for that one or be very very afraid). We don't know how you are doing it, but we are close to finding the answers we seek. Consider this your final warning--you will be stopped from writing people into oblivion.

TISOCILAOMPE

(The international service of conspiracies in literature and other mean people equalizers)

PS. We have taken measures to avenge our deaths if you print this and we die!

- Editors note: Yes it is all one big conspiracy around here. Our official handbook, *How to Get your Conspiracy Noticed by Overzealous, Stupid Conspiracy Finder Organizations*, states in chapter 7 that the first step in wiping out all traces of your existence is to figure out how to pronounce that awful acronym of yours. The second step is to say it five times while bouncing balls made of Silly Putty against a white wall. Then all we have to do is sacrifice paint chips from the white wall to the god of Organizations with Way Too Long Names. We have our experts working on it now!

Dear Flipside,

Considering the Presidents' financial strain due to overwhelming legal expenses and due to the success of the Tommy Lee and Pamela Anderson video the White House has decided to offer "The Slick Willy and Big Mama Monica" video for just \$29.95. Also, this educational video will be available to America's highschool health and sex-ed. classes for just \$19.95. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,
Janet Reno

Dear Flipside,

Okay. Picture this High Concept: we set up shop in Dixon Hall and place a few hidden cameras in Flipside headquarters and...watch. If your lives really are as bizarre as your center features make them out to be. We're talking PHAT ratings! But if not, we can toss in a token rubber-cement-sniffing drag-queen, an equal-rights activist with chronic explosive diarrhea, and an insane egomaniacal artist/general freak. Now we're talking prime-time TV here, people.
Love n' Empowerment,
MTV

Editor's Note: We already have an insane egomaniacal artist/general freak on our staff. Actually, we have several. But other than that, we're really not as exciting as you believe us to be. But if you want to show half-hour clips of us sitting around in the Flipside office, making paper airplanes out of rejected non-returnable manuscripts, drinking rainbarrels full of coffee, and watching ladybugs crawl around between the panes of the windows...well, you do that!

Dear Editors,
Have you seen my Dog? He is half German Shepherd one part Poodle and one part Sheep dog. He really digs your magazine. As in, buries them in the yard and then digs them back up and re buries them. I don't know if he likes them or hates them, but considering his fascination with your stupid rag, I figured he might have headed for you after he ran away last week. Please let me know if you see him.
Sincerely,
Richard Adams

To Buy A Soul

by Dan Wentzel

Art by Jeremy Tannehill



March 16
Monica drove me through a region of the city that I am not familiar with today. Gaudy neon burned my eyes from a thousand shop windows and marquees. The roads were pocked with potholes and the sidewalks reduced to worn cobblestone. No tourist would come there. It was a domain only suitable for those who had long forsaken the concept of clean living.

The rain froze as it fell, washing none of the grime and filth from the streets as the limosine bounced and rocked on the rough roads. Despite the ice and narrow streets, Monica had little difficulty piloting the limousine through the litter strewn roads.

The harlots were out in force. Along the streets was a line of red-cheeked, dripping-nosed women, all dressed in a manner that was most unsuitable for the weather, as more flesh was revealed than covered. There was no shortage of potential customers. Drunken, unshaven men staggered out of innumerable bars and strip clubs hoping to spend what was left of their money to buy a few moments of unblushing lust. I scanned the buildings until I saw the address I was looking for. It was a modest brownstone with black metal railings on a short flight of steps. It was out of place, the only building that had been maintained on the outside for the past three blocks.

"Monica, pull over to your left, that's the one."

Her green eyes flashed in the mirror as she studied me to see whether or not I was certain. I nodded once, and she inched the car to the left, on the lookout for a place to park. We circled three times before finding an area large enough for the limosine. I smiled ironically to myself. Pure intentions are the keys to heaven, but they won't get you a parking space anywhere near it. Monica stayed behind to watch the vehicle. I wasn't worried for her safety. I always keep a can of pepper spray and a stun gun in the glove compartment, and Monica has no compunctions about using either. I remember once returning to my car to find four sizable gentlemen lying unconscious in a pile. Evidently they had attempted to pull her forcibly from the car and rape her. They were unaware that she has been studying Judo since the age of eight.

Pulling my collar up to keep off the rain, I made my way to the door of the building, frowning slightly at the sign saying "escort service." I hadn't removed my hand from the knocker before a slight, copper-skinned vixen with a pierced nose and chewing bubble-gum opened the door.

"Hey, what's your pleasure?" she said as she rubbed her breasts casually. Her hands ended in vicious claws which spoke more self-defense than seduction. I averted my gaze rather pointedly, but her wares had been suitably displayed for my benefit, and I doubt she would have hesitated to describe her professional experience in all its lurid detail. My stomach turned as I inhaled to speak.

"I have an appointment with Candace Morgen, please."

The woman turned up her nose skeptically. "Candy? What do you want to see her for?"

"That would be rather awkward to explain. Please, madam, it is raining rather hard . . ."

"Oh, yeah. Come on in." The well-tanned shoulders shrugged and she moved out of the way. She led me into a receiving room just off the main hallway. The carpet was at least two inches thick and the wallpaper had the texture of felt. Everything was so soft, I nearly began to believe I was in a padded cell. I waited on a plush couch for several minutes and was similarly approached by three other women in various stages of undress.

Finally, a hulking individual with profuse chest hair and body odor motioned for me to follow him. We climbed a flight of stairs, passing a woman with no shirt who was being earnestly fondled by a short man with a nose like a ship's rudder. The woman tried, half-heartedly, to cover herself but her . . . companion paid no mind. My guide said nothing, but led me to a door on the third floor. He opened it without knocking and gestured for me to step inside.

Candace looked up from her desk. I wondered, fleetingly, how paperwork could pile up in this particular profession.

Candace is a stunningly attractive woman. To describe her as anything else would be a fabrication of the worst sort. The contours of her face, her shoulder length chestnut hair, and her inhumanly white teeth all cry out to be captured by an artist's brush. She wears real clothing, tastefully cut, and yet there is an allure about her. She is a temptress, doubly dangerous in that she is subtle in her art.

We are not, strictly speaking, good friends. And yet I enjoy her company immensely. Despite the locality of her whorehouse, her clientele is made up mostly of men from my social strata, and we often find ourselves seated across from each other at dinner parties. Despite our different backgrounds, we agree well with

each other. In one case, when her john was unexpectedly called away on business, she made me her honorary date for the night, and I cannot remember a more pleasant evening.

She flashed a brilliant smile at me, rose, and stepped around the desk.

"Connor Maxwell. I have to admit you're the last person I ever thought I'd see here."

I decided to take that as a compliment. With a slight bow, I grasped her outstretched hand. "Candace."

She cocked her head at me. "Do you ever smile?"

"Infrequently."

She pouted. "Shame too." She lifted two polaroid photos from her desk and handed them to me. The pictures were of myself, being approached by her young employees on the couch in the room downstairs.

"We take these as a precaution, in case we need to blackmail someone. But with that look on your face, I don't think I could convince anyone that you were enjoying yourself."

"Besides which, you have a copy on thirty-five millimeter, and you're keeping the negatives." She raised her eyebrows at me, and I continued. "You really need a slightly higher quality of one-way mirror; the one downstairs is a bit transparent."

She shrugged. "I'll see to it."

"Fine. Now, forgive me for being abrupt, but I'm not exactly in my element here. I'd like to get down to business right off if you don't mind."

"If I had a nickel for every time I heard someone say that . . ."

She smiled suggestively at me as I took a deep breath.

"I'm sorry, Connor, but if you could see your face right now. You're in a cathouse, Connor, don't try to be dignified about it. Now have a seat; what can I do for you?"

The chair was uncomfortably low. When Candace sat pertly on her desktop, my face was at a level with her hips. While her skirt was not indecently cut, I was suddenly very aware of the shape of her legs. My neck grew stiff trying to look her in the eyes as I described the young girl I was looking for. Candace frowned and looked away from me.

"Yes, she's one of mine. She came in about three months ago." She may well have had more to say, perhaps a judgement of the girl's professional competence, but thankfully, Candace spared me. All she said was: "How did you know she was here?"

"Her uncle is a member of my club. He has hired a private investigator, and I overheard them discussing her case. I hired men of my own, and mine are more efficient."

"What do you want with her?"

"Would you send her down to my car, please?"

"Are you going to take her back to her parents?"

"Not against her will."

"She won't go, Connor. She's too ashamed to face her parents after three months here."

"Just send her to me, Candace. Don't tell her why, just send her to me. I promise you, whatever she does, she will do of her own free choice."

Candace looked at me for a full minute before responding. "She's my responsibility. I'm trusting you."

"I won't harm her. I promise you."

"Oh, I know that, you're too awkward around women to be a threat. I'm just being maternal."

"Then you'll send her to me?"

"She'll be down in ten minutes."

I nodded my thanks, told her where my car was parked, and turned around. I was to the door before something occurred to me. I turned to her. "Why aren't you trying to stop me?"

She frowned deeply at me, then spoke. "Connor, you're going to have a hard time believing this, but I enjoy my work. It's not very demanding, and, if done right, it can be rather enjoyable. But I know that most of my girls hate what they're doing. I care about them Connor, and the last thing I want to do is hurt them."

It took me a moment to consider that. "Candace, I expected worse of you. I apologize for misjudging you."

"Connor, people misjudge me all the time. To a certain extent, it's part of my job." She rose and moved to the chair behind the desk. "I'll accept your apology on one condition."

"Go on?"

"Stop calling me Candace! My name is Candy for crying out loud." She looked up at me and winked. A smile made its way to my lips of its own accord.

"I'll think about it." I tipped my hat and moved out the door to the stairs carefully keeping my eyes from wandering until I was well out of the building.

Inside the limosine, Monica remarked that my clothes reeked of cheap perfume. I nodded wearily, and put my overcoat into the compartment below the seat to keep the smell from spreading. We waited for several minutes before a knock came at the window.

When I rolled down the window, a slight, doe-eyed young woman with short dark hair knelt beside the door. Her short vinyl jacket was covered down its neon yellow surface with droplets of half-melted slush. "Candy said you wanted to do business?"

Always quick with a joke was Candy.

"How much?"

She paused just long enough to indicate that she was considering how high she could raise her price.

"Three hundred."

"Done. Get in."

She opened the door and climbed in. I gestured for



her to take the seat across from me, closed the door behind her, and gestured for Monica to drive on. The young woman sat across from me, eyes wide with what was either fear or greed. She was horribly thin. An emaciated beanstalk. The cold had accentuated her alabaster skin with blotches of pale pink. Had I been a vampire, I would have turned from her for there was little blood to be found in her. "Are you quite comfortable?" She nodded briskly. "Can I have something to

drink?"

"I have some peppermint tea on ice if you'd care for it."

"No, thank you." Evidently, her taste ran toward stronger stuff.



"Do you have a name?"

"Trish."

"Trish. My name is Connor Maxwell. This is my assistant, Monica Stevens."

The girl turned around and Monica waved silently from her seat. Despite her smile, Monica was obviously as appalled by Trish's appearance as I was. The girl nodded and turned back toward me. "Is she going to be watching us?"

I watched Monica in the rear view mirror as she chuckled through her nose, covering her lips with her gloved hand. I cleared my throat chidingly until she took on a more dignified expression.

"There won't really be anything to see, madam. I'm paying for your time not for your . . ." I decided to be tactful. " . . . services."

"What?"

"To put it bluntly, keep your clothes on, madam. I just want to talk to you."

She eyed me skeptically. "About what?"

"About you. Your lifestyle interests me. I wonder how you came to be where you are. I'm assuming this wasn't your first choice of career."

She looked away to the window. "Yeah, well life's tough."

The urge to roll my eyes was overpowering. "True. True. I'm wondering though how tough has it been to you."

"I'm doing okay," she muttered.

I had to laugh at that. Perhaps that was a little cruel, but I did need to catch her attention.

"I'm sorry, Trish, but you are most certainly not doing 'okay.' I hate to bring this up, but YOU ARE A WHORE. You sell your body and soul into slavery on a

nightly basis, so let's not pretend that your only complaint about this lifestyle is the lack of a dental plan."

She looked at me, stung and ready to fight back. I inclined my head. "Deny it if you wish. We both know I'm right." She closed her mouth and turned back to the window.

"With that point made, I ask again, how did you come to be here?"

She didn't answer for quite a while. "None of your

business." "None of this is my business. Nevertheless, it's in your best interest to tell me."

It was a full two minutes before she said a word to me. I was beginning to wonder whether she would, and was considering just how far I was willing to push her before I gave up. Soon, however, I noticed a peculiar tightness of her jaw. Abruptly, her breath quickened and her voice quivered with pain as she concentrated on getting the words out of her mouth. "I got pregnant when I was sixteen. My parents weren't happy with me, so I left."

"The child?"

She closed her eyes and shook her head. "You left your child with your parents."

She nodded violently, biting her lip to keep from crying, but a tear was already trickling down her cheek. I put my hand on her shoulder, but she batted it away and huddled within herself until she had regained her composure.

"What the hell do you want to know all this for?"

I didn't answer that question, though perhaps I should have. Instead, I reached into the compartment beside the seat and withdrew the brown package.

I tossed it on the seat and nodded toward it.

"There's twenty-five thousand dollars. Remake your life."

She was dumbfounded. I suppose in her shoes (God forbid) I might have had a similar reaction. Admittedly, this sort of thing doesn't happen to someone every day. I elaborated. "You have twenty-five thousand dollars in that package. I want you to take that money and make something of yourself. That should be enough to rent an apartment and eat for a year or so, depending on how well you

budget. You can get your high school equivalency, find a more respectable, though perhaps less profitable, line of work."

She stared at me, confused. "Why?"

"You've read stories of men selling their soul to the devil? I'm buying your soul for God. Take that money and get yourself out of the hell you've made of your life. I should warn you, don't overestimate it. Twenty-five thousand will get you the necessities, but you'll hardly be living in luxury for very long. I'm giving you a chance to make a fresh start, but I won't pave the way for you. To be honest, you could probably make more than that working for Candy, but that is payment. This is a gift."

"What's the catch?"

"The catch, Trish, is that you will be held accountable for every penny. This money is to be used to make you into a better human being. If you waste it, it will be on your own head. You could take this money and gamble it away, or buy a new car, or the like. In doing so, however, you will have let yourself down, which is the worst sin I can think of."

She eyed me warily for a moment.

"What's in it for you?"

I have never pitied a human being more than at that very moment.

"Trish, if you had any idea how much money I really have, you would probably faint. It's positively obscene how wealthy I am. I've considered giving most of it away to charities, but I find charities to be so horribly organized. So much money is wasted on the bureaucracy, that I find these direct acts of charity so much more productive."

"But why . . ."

"Trish, sometimes people do things for no reason except to be selfless. That money is an hour's worth of investing for me. For you it means so much more, and heaven knows I don't know what else to do with it."

I gestured to Monica, who began to circle back toward the cathouse.

"There is one other catch, Trish. Surrounded by your . . . ill-reputed friends, the temptation to misuse this gift would be very, very strong. Monica is taking us to the airport where I will buy you a ticket to any city in the country. You'll be leaving in twelve hours."

"I have to leave now?"

I nodded. "You may return to your room and pack. I'll send Monica to help you carry your luggage, but you're leaving today. Those are the terms, Trish. I'll give you some time to think about it."

We were almost to the house when she turned to me. "I'll do it." Sincere admiration flooded my face. "Well done."

-September 19

I do not recall a more perfect autumn day. The weather was a gift from God. Perhaps one meant to console me for the disappointment it brought me.

I sat in the hotel room, quietly brooding when Stephan came in. She was draped across his arm, looking up at him with the most disgustingly false look of infatuation I have ever seen. Perhaps Monica would be able to describe her acoutrements in non-offensive terms. For myself, I can only say that what areas were covered were not especially well covered. "Thank you, Stephan, that will be sufficient."

She whirled in fear at the sound of my voice and, recognizing me, tried to run. Stephan has long arms and a fierce grip. In an instant, he had deposited her smartly onto the hotel bed. With a nod from me, Stephan turned and walked out the door. A hard worker, certainly, but Stephan is not much for conversation.

Trish stood up, fearfully clutching her half-sleeved jacket about herself as though to ward me off. I took a deep and penetrating breath before speaking.

"Sit down, Trish."

"Listen, Mister I can

I was suddenly on my feet and inches from her face. "Trish, you are not a child, so I should not have to repeat myself to you. Now SIT DOWN!"

She complied immediately. I took a step back and placed my hand to my left temple to ease the throbbing. "Monica, would you fetch me an aspirin?"

Monica nodded briefly and went to the washroom to fetch the pill. I said nothing to Trish, and she was too frightened to say anything to me. Monica returned and I downed the aspirin with some peppermint tea.

"Now, Trish. You were given twenty-five thousand dollars six months ago and told to remake yourself. As Stephan has only now picked you up on the streets, it is evident that you failed..."

"I..."

"Shut up, Trish. You will speak when I tell you to and not before." I took another breath. "I said that you would be held accountable for every penny. It is not my habit to speak idly about such things. Now tell me what you did with the money. You may speak now."

"I'm sorry..."

"That's as may be, Trish. Now answer me."

She started to weep then, but through the sobs I could hear her moan "I only kept five hundred."

My breath was hot in my nostrils. I spoke slowly. "What did you do with the rest of the money, Trish?"

She only wept.

"ANSWER ME!" I was inches from her face when she looked up. Her mouth dropped open and she shrunk away from

me. After a moment of locking eyes with me, she timidly let out a few words.

"I gave it to Jill."

My anger dissipated like smoke in a breeze. "Your child?"

She nodded and fell to the bed, sobbing relentlessly. I frowned and turned away until she quieted.

"Very well, then, Trish. You are free to go."

The breath caught in her throat as she looked up. I looked down at her and allowed my frown to soften.

"I'm not a vindictive man, Trish. You were given a second chance, and you chose not to make use of it. As much as I am disappointed, stupidity is not a sin. You may go now." I opened the door and gestured for her to leave. Warily, but quickly, she began to exit.

"One final gift, Trish." I said as she

progress on his latest construction site, we were interrupted by a hoarse scream. I looked up to see Candy trying insistently to get past Monica into my office. Tears of rage were streaming down her cheeks and her beautiful face was puffed and contorted. I did not fear for Monica's safety, but it would not have been long before she would have been forced into more drastic measures, and I could not bear to see Candy injured. "Let her through, Monica."

With understandable concern for my safety, Monica stayed very near as Candy made her way over to me. Despite Monica's best efforts, I soon felt the sting of Candy's palm on my cheek.

"You son of a bitch!"

I held up a restraining hand to Monica, who almost looked disappointed. Candy continued. "She's dead, Connor! She's

I had never before noticed just how irritating Nicholas' voice could be.

"You sent her out to bang this psycho and you have the nerve to blame..."

I have little time for a man so insensitive. "Nicholas, you are fired. Get out."

His jaw dropped as he stared at me. I glanced once at Monica, never letting go of Candy. Evidently, my assistant has a similar opinion of Nicholas, as the particular arm lock she used was one of the more painful in her repertoire. In under a minute, Nicholas had been forcibly and quietly ejected from the room by a woman one third his size.

I gently stroked Candy's hair. "Please don't listen to that imbecile. If you think I am to blame..."

She pushed away from me. "I don't want to blame anyone. I want her back!" Candy turned her back to me. "She was only seventeen. Seventeen years old and I killed her."

"No, Candy, I don't exactly approve of what you do for a living, but you are not a murderer. I'm as much at fault as you are."

"I sent her out to screw the man who killed her."

"And I felt I had been generous enough and refused to give her another chance. She would be alive today if I had." I touched her shoulders. "Forgive me the pain you are in. I helped bring it about."

She whirled around, her cheeks still glistening with moisture. "Why her, Connor? I have twenty-six girls. Why her?"

"I knew her uncle. Not well, mind you, but I can't help everyone. I only help those I have some connection to."

She looked at me with utter revulsion. "My God, why don't you just pull names out of a hat?"

"I know it sounds arbitrary. I used to think it was downright unfair. But I can't think of all the people I'm

not reaching. I'd go mad. I have to concentrate on the ones I am helping."

She simply shook her head. "Do you enjoy playing God?"

"No."

She wanted me to say more. Perhaps there was more to say, but I could find no words. Disgusted, she turned from me. I called to her as she made her way to the door. "What will you do now?"

She did not face me. "I don't know. I can't run a cathouse any more."

I jumped at the chance. "Perhaps you would consider working for me?"

She turned, surprised. As I moved closer, I smiled gently. "I anticipate having a number of openings in my various endeavors. Say, twenty-six?" I took her hand. "And one very special position. I need someone I can trust. Someone who can help me stop playing God and start actually helping people."

Her eyes were very wet as she reached out to me.

"Lesson one. Stop helping people, start caring for them."

"But I do..."

She placed her finger to my lips. "Then let us care for you."

-Flipside



was nearly out the door. "Stephan will give you a plane ticket back to Seattle. If you insist on pursuing this line of work, I would feel better if you were under Candy's care. And judging by the bruises on your arm, I don't expect you will want to stay here."

She shook her head. "Thank you."

"Of course, there is also the option of returning to your parents."

My heart broke as she closed her eyes tightly against the tears, turned, and dashed off into the hallway. Repressing an urge to pound my fist against the table, I sighed and sat back down on the chair. Monica came up and put her hand on my shoulder. "You tried, Connor."

"Theological question, Monica. If someone sacrifices their soul for someone else, wouldn't that charity be enough for salvation?"

Monica made no response. Instead, she leaned down and kissed me softly on the cheek. Squeezing my shoulder as a sign of comfort, she left me to my own thoughts. A tear threatened to make its way down my cheek, and I welcomed it.

-October 22

As Nicholas and I reviewed the

dead! You sent her back to me to take care of and now she's dead! God damn it!"

For an instant, my senses shut down. My world was nothing more than the desperate appeal of two doe eyes. My lips nearly refused to let her name past them, fearing the answer.

"Trish?"

"Why couldn't you have just given her another chunk of money and another chance? You sent her back to me instead and look what happens!"

Candy was crying now. Her sobs sounded much like her protegee. Too much.

"How did she die, Candy?"

Perhaps it was unusual that a woman who had shouted at me so venomously could so quickly fall into my arms, sobbing. Perhaps it was more unusual that I did not notice the contradiction at the time. Her voice was a hoarse whisper.

"I sent her out on a job, and the sick bastard carved her up like a side of beef." Was this poor girl to have no dignity, even in her death? I squeezed my eyes shut feeling a warm flow of salt water down my face.

"Lady, you got some nerve!"

Are you afraid of making your partner angry? Does your partner humiliate you? Does your partner threaten you? Are the bad times starting to outweigh the good? Do you feel you need to defend yourself against your partner's accusations? Does your partner call you names? Is your partner extremely jealous? Does your partner always have to be "right"? Does your partner criticize you? Does your partner try to control your time, your friends, your interests? Do you blame yourself when your partner hurts you? Are you afraid to argue with your partner? Does your partner physically restrain or hurt you? Are you losing friends to please your partner? Are you Afraid to end your relationship? Do you do things you don't want to just to please your partner? Are you losing self-respect? Are you afraid of making your partner angry? Does

Are you in a violent relationship? your partner threaten you? Are the bad times starting to outweigh the good? Do you feel you need to defend yourself against your partner's accusations? Does your partner call you names? Is your partner extremely jealous? Does your partner always have to be "right"? Does your partner criticize you? Does your partner try to control your time, your friends, your interests? Do you blame yourself when your partner hurts you? Are you afraid to argue with your partner? Does your partner physically restrain or hurt you? Are you losing friends to please your partner? Are you Afraid to end your relationship? Do you do things you don't want to just to please your partner? Are you losing

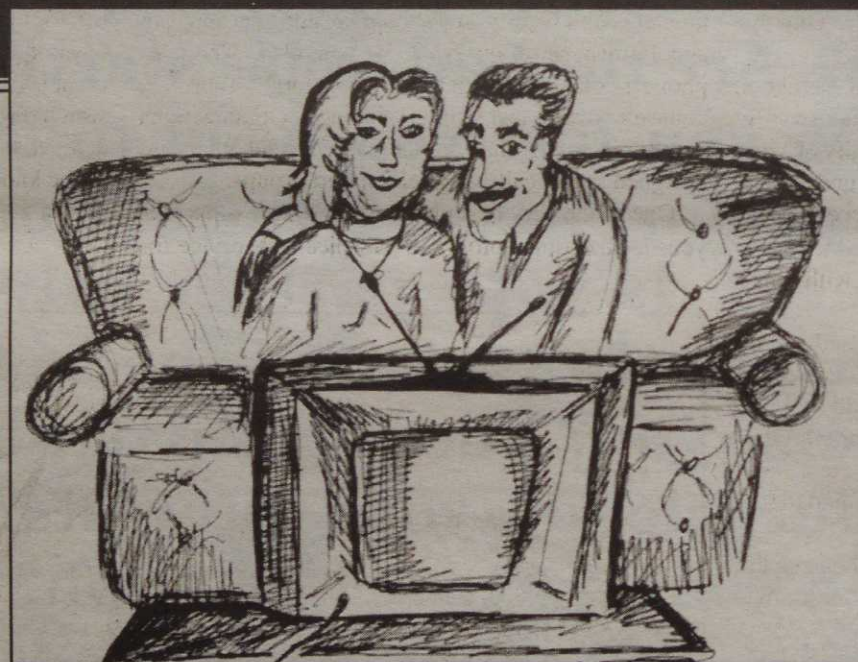
You don't deserve to be abused. There is help.



Washington Women's Shelter
223-9190 • 1-800-791-4000
Greene County Women's Center
852-2463

DEALING WITH GRIEF

by Lynn McMillen
Art by Kenny Musko



"We won!" I shriek, my euphoria as hot and bright as lightning. "We won!" I pound up the stairs of our home, wildly waving the letter clutched in my hand, the incontrovertible proof of victory. Finally, after so many years of grief and pain, of being denied again and again, we have been vindicated! We have forced the government to acknowledge that Jim's terrible illness was caused by his service in Vietnam. We have required them to honor their debt to us, to my pain-wracked husband and the family he cannot support, and to begin shouldering the financial burden that has weighed us down for so long. For six miserable years we have scraped and struggled, fought and scrimped, waited and hoped for a victory Jim never believed we would win.

Brandishing my flag of victory, the final, binding ruling of the Board of Veterans Appeals, I round the turn at the top of the stairs, and burst through the doorway of our bedroom, "Jim, we won! Jim? Jim?? JIM!!! Nooooooooooooo!!!!!"

The shriek tears at my throat, but denial is meaningless. The familiar face on the pillow is blank now. One eye stares sightlessly, already filming over. The other, the one with the Robert Mitchum droop when he'd had a few beers, is now closed forever.

In one brief second blazing victory and ultimate defeat collide. Breath is driven from me. I am everything. I am nothing. Then I am gone.

I find myself again sitting on the edge of the picnic table in the front yard. My throat is raw, my eyes are raw, my mind is raw — and I'm not sure why.

Memory creeps back like a beaten dog. I'm alone. I'm a widow now — feel the word, touch the flavor of it, bleak and bitter on my tongue. Jim is gone. Never again will I watch him read to our children, never kiss him goodnight again, never hear the sound of his voice saying, "I love you, honey." We've been together so many years, but now, like a log driven by the cutter's wedge, we've been sundered, and the agony of the loss tears like ragged splinters.

Awareness, too, returns, like fog lifting from the mountain ridges, grayness slowly giving way to light. Thought, like a disused and ill-stored machine, slowly groans to life.

daughter Beth Ann died in the bombing explosion of Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland two days before Christmas.

Regardless of the kind of trauma, or the depth of the pain, knowing how to handle grief, and where to go for help when we are being overwhelmed by our feelings are important skills for living.

When grief strikes us, it affects us at every level — physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual, according to Bonnie Harr, a counselor who specializes in grief therapy. How we respond to that grief determines how it affects our lives. Most of us have developed coping mechanisms for dealing with grief over the course of our lives.

While there is some disagreement, a majority of experts agree that grief is experienced in a variety of phases, or stages. Though not everyone goes through all of them, and not necessarily in the same order, they make a good starting point for discussing the process of grieving.

The first stage is the initial shock phase — the realization we have lost someone/something very important to us, followed by powerful feelings of sadness, pain, and loss. For me, the initial stage was stunning and immediate, as I ran into the bedroom and discovered my husband's dead body.

Frequently, this period of initial agony is followed a sort of numbness — a feeling often described as "zombie-like" or "like living behind a pane of glass." This does not mean there is no pain, but rather, the curious semi-detached state allows the griever time to come to grips with his or her situation.

A common reaction during this period that is seldom mentioned, but is fairly well-known in professional circles is amnesia — usually not total amnesia, but gaps in memory, especially of the period immediately following the initial grief.

By way of illustration, I still do not remember much of Monday (the day Jim died) following his death. I remember bits and pieces here and there. I know, for instance, that I called my friend Christina and asked her to come and stay with me, but I do not remember the call itself. I remember finding Jim dead, and sitting at the picnic table afterwards, but don't remember much about the time in between, and

Do something. Do . . . what? Call. Yes — call someone. Who? A name flickers briefly through the shorted-out circuits of my brain. The last person I spoke to on the phone. Like a zombie I walk to the house, and reach for the phone, push the "redial" button, and wait for someone to talk to me. Slowly, through the fog and the deadness, we get it sorted out. I call the ambulance, the police. Yes, they'll come right away. No, don't bother hurrying.

I notice the time. "The kids! Oh, God, the kids!" They'll be getting on the bus any minute. I can't let them come home to this. I have to stop them. I call the school, telling the secretary I talk to what has happened, asking her to hold the boys for me to pick up.

Then I drive to the school, somehow holding myself together in spite of the aching hollowness inside me, and walk toward the square, brick building where my children, all innocent, wait for mom to come.

They can see I've been crying — already I can see apprehension on their little faces. Ian asks, "What is it, mom?" My guts wrench within me. I kneel down, and sweep them into my arms, burying my face against their warmth.

"Your daddy died." Silence — for a stunned second. Then tears — and we cry as a family, our tears washing the open, bleeding wound in our hearts.

No one gets through life without experiencing loss and pain. Some people will never experience a loss this traumatic — and some people will face far worse, as did Carol and Glenn Johnson of Greensburg, whose

in fact, do not know how long that time was.

Other people have told me I called them, or I can infer it from the fact that they knew that Jim was dead, but I do not have any specific memory of any of those phone calls. Nor do I remember anything Chris said or did during the first evening when she stayed with me.

If I had not learned that this sort of memory gap is common in times of deep distress or trauma, I would be very upset by the loss. As it is, I recognize it as a normal reaction, and don't worry about it.

As the numbness wears off, the third phase can be the most painful of all. Now all the hurt and pain that has been held at bay comes rushing back. This is the phase when a person is most likely to seek counseling or join a self-help group, or find some way to channel his or her grief.

When my father died, I worked out some of my grief writing articles about grief. When Jim died, I began connecting with other Vietnam veterans suffering from the war as he had been, and offering them a sympathetic ear, and an understanding listener to share their troubles with. This was my therapy. It was my way of moving my life forward into the adjustment and coping phase of grieving.

Healthy ways of coping are as numerous and varied as are the people suffering bereavement. Being a verbal person, I coped with my grief by talking and writing. Glenn Johnson, Beth Ann's father, coped by becoming a tireless advocate of airline safety. Johnson feels strongly that the work he did with the survivors' family group and the resultant airline safety activism helped him maintain his sanity in the emotionally devastating aftermath of the explosion.

Beth Ann's mother, Carole, has put her hard-won sensitivity to other's pain to work as a nurse for Caregivers, an organization that offers respite care to families of patients in hospice programs.

Both Johnsons also joined a program called The Compassionate Friends, a group formed specifically to meet the needs of parents and families grieving the loss of a child.

After Jim's death, a friend of mine told me about the Vietnam History Project, which, while not specifically a support group, is an on-line community of Vietnam veterans and people who know and understand vets and their issues. The support and acceptance I received there from people who understood me was extremely important in helping me deal with Jim's death.

Grief support groups of all kinds exist, and can be an important part of helping a person who is dealing with grief to express that grief in a caring and supportive atmosphere, and to begin to face and work through that grief.

Like the phases of grief, grief behaviors tend to follow patterns, too.

Crying is probably the commonest, and one of the most healthy ways of dealing with grief. It is an outlet, a relief, though one that our culture often makes difficult for men.

Men often "act on their grief" as did Glenn Johnson after the death of his daughter. Men may find some need to fill, something to build or change or act upon, and quite literally "work out" their grief. This is in part because of the cultural prohibition we have against men crying in our society.

Faced with their own deep, cultural aversion to the healthy outlet of tears, men find themselves faced with the need to develop another healthy outlet for their grief. But partly, it is because men simply tend to be more likely to act out their needs and impulses, while women are more likely to seek support through interactions with friends and family. Both methods of dealing with grief are healthy, both work — each fulfills a different need. Nor are these universals. Some women find active ways to express their grief, too, and some men allow themselves the cleansing relief of tears.

Another healthy way of dealing with grief is what Bonnie Harr refers to as "telling the story" — talking about the person you've lost. In talking about your loved one, you recreate his or her life, you reinforce the memory, you give yourself permission to both remember and to grieve.

A valuable addition to talking about someone is writing. Keeping a journal can be extremely useful for some people, as the very act of writing something down makes it ours in a unique way. A friend once expressed it like this — "When you grieve, it (the grief) owns you, but when you write the words down, you own them."

Words in a journal are as permanent as we care to make them. By recording stories about the life of our

loved one, we re-create feelings and memories, and in re-creating them, bring ourselves closer to the person we lost.

Journals can help us recover lost memories — sometimes the very act of writing something down will trigger another memory, and that one still another.

When we grieve, we often lose certain things, too. In my case, I lost the desire to write. I have been a writer in my personal life, and as a professional for years. I kept a journal for many years before Jim's death. Since he died, the journal has lain untouched.

Before Jim died, I earned a nice supplementary income for our family by writing. It was a year after he died before any interest at all in writing returned, and only in the last few months that I have become excited about writing again.

For me, writing is an intensely personal act, a part of who I am. While that essential "I" was crippled, the part of me that found expression in writing was crippled also. Now that I have integrated my loss into my life and recovered my sense of wholeness and security again, that part of me has also healed, and now, again, seeks expression in writing.

Though most of us experience some depression, painful feelings, sad thoughts — for most of us these are temporary. We experience them, deal with them, and slowly recover to live healthy lives again. For some people, though, grieving becomes pathological. Sad thoughts become intrusive ones. "The blues" becomes depression. Memories become delusions or even hallucinations, anxiety becomes full-blown panic attacks.

When grief rules our lives, when it becomes the main focus of our existence, when we "just can't get over it" — we need to seek help. Grief counselors, grief support groups, focused grieving programs are available in most communities to help people get beyond grief to living again. One of the first sources to check is your local church. Religious leaders are frequently trained to handle grief, and are also excellent sources for referrals to other grieving resources. Most hospitals have a mental health facility, and should be able to arrange an appointment or an interview for you, also. The telephone book, usually under "counselors" often lists counselors who deal with grief issues. Organizations like Rainbows, Compassionate Friends, and others are designed specifically as grief-support groups.

One of the very best places to seek grief support is your local hospice program. Hospice is a service for

people in the last few weeks or months of their lives. All hospice workers understand grief, for by its very nature, grief is a part of what they deal with daily. Hospices may be listed independently, or as part of a hospital listing, as they frequently are part of a hospital's outreach efforts.

If there is a campus ministry at your college, you may very well find someone to speak to there. A school psychologist may also be useful in helping you deal with your grief.

Grief is not eternal. The pain DOES end — at least its constant presence does. There are still moments of grief, but it no longer rules your emotions. To finish grieving is not to be totally pain-free. Rather, it is to go back to living your life with no more than the occasional wince — the memory of what you have forever lost now a part of you, but only one small part, and integrated into who you are now. The end of grief is the return to life — not as it was, but as it will be from now on.

I knew that my grief had ended when I became open to the idea of another relationship. I have not forgotten Jim. I never will.

I visit his grave; we talk. I think of him often — more often now, actually, than I did when I was grieving the most. Then it was sometimes too painful. Now, as the pain fades, it is leaving room for the memories to return.

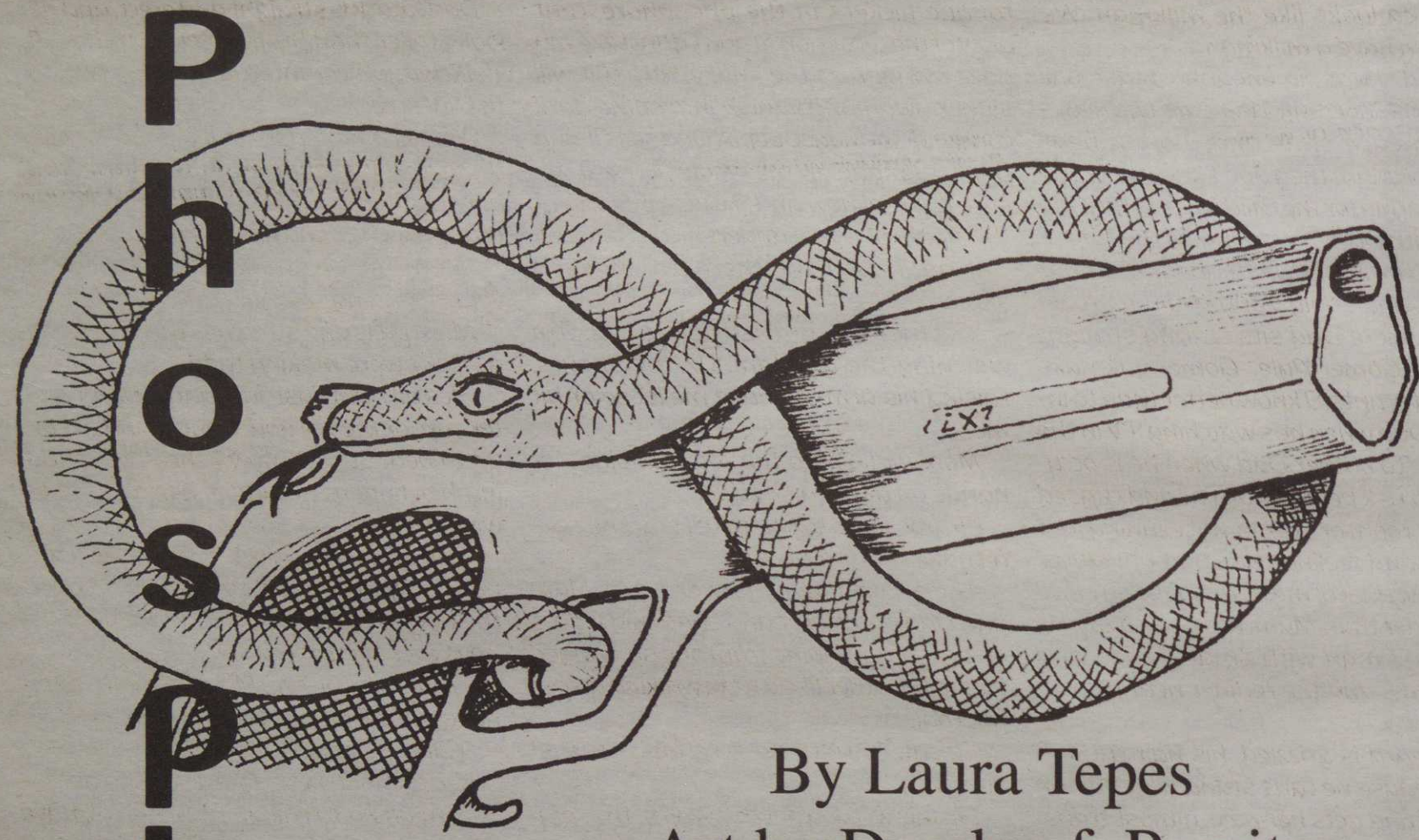
Now I can look back at the handsome, confident, blue-eyed sergeant who didn't ask me out because "nice girls like you don't go out with guys like me."

I can remember with a chuckle the impressive "British sergeant-major" handle-bar mustache he grew the second year we were married — and how the sun bleached it a ridiculous shade of brick red. I can see the ear-to-ear "cut punkin" grin on his face as he held his first-born son in his arms for the first time — even before I did. And if there is a tear in my eye, there is also a smile on my face.

No — I will never forget Jim. He was a part of my life for far too long for that to ever happen. But nowadays, there is someone new in my life. When I day-dream, it is his face I see in front of me; the voice which rings in my heart is his. And when I go to sleep at night, the warmth I feel surrounding me is the warmth of the knowledge that I am again loved, cherished and part of a healthy, growing relationship.

-Flipside





By Laura Tepes
Art by Derek c.f. Pegritz

Once a year, with all the splendor and pageantry of Christmas or the Fourth of July, the carnival comes to Ashland. The baseball diamond in the center of town is transformed into a spectacle of dazzling lights and whirring, dizzying amusement rides peppered with strategically placed booths specializing in Polish sausages and hot dogs on a stick and funnel cakes dusted with powdered sugar until they look like small snow covered mountain ranges. In May, I start counting the days before the carnival arrives even though it doesn't come until the first week in August.

We going, my Mother, younger sisters and I, without my father. Dad's appearances with the family are reserved for church and the company picnic. I'm glad we go without him because as far as I know, the Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary stand is the only place that sells hot sausage sandwiches with grilled onions and peppers. Dad doesn't like to eat food prepared by anyone but Mum or Gramma, because, he says, he doesn't know how long the meat has been sitting at room temperature or where the cook's hands were before she made his sandwich. Mum says Dad doesn't like to eat out because it's more expensive.

The Tilt O' Whirl makes me as green as pistachio pudding and after riding it, I walk sideways the rest of the night, full of sausage and cotton candy and clutching a hard-stuffed white husky dog and a coffee mug that I won by tossing a nickel into it. Mum lets us play roulette until we each win a stuffed animal. We are all as tall as Coco the Clown, a wooden cutout that represents how tall you must be to ride the really stomach-wrenching machines, and so we ride every ride. Dad would have a conniption if he knew what a terrible amount of money we were throwing away at the carnival.

When Jill and I were smaller, and

Jenna still in diapers, Dad would take us to the cinema matinee on Saturdays but wouldn't let us buy popcorn. We smuggled pretzel sticks and red licorice into the theater under our coats and couldn't leave our seats until the credits had run. Dad forbade drinks in the theater because he was afraid someone would see the thermos when we raised it to our lips and recognize that it was not bought at the concession stand—that and his belief that if we weren't putting fluids into our bodies, there would be no reason to interrupt the movie with frequent trips to the little girls' room. Our mouths were parched and our tongues swollen after the last of the credits rolled and we climbed over each other, hurrying to get to the water fountain in the lobby.

Going to the carnival with Dad was the same disappointing experience. We just walked around, rode the merry-go-round and Ferris wheel, if we were lucky, and went home and ate grilled cheese sandwiches before bed.

Dad says the carnival is a money pit and a goddamned freak show.

Mum stuffs the remains of our cotton candy into her purse so Dad won't see it. She oughtn't have worried, because Dad is so engrossed in the television show he's watching that he hardly notices we're home.

"Hold still, Nana," Mum tells Jenna in the hallway, which is lined with mud-crusted shoes and last week's newspapers on their way to the burn barrel.

We call Jenna, the youngest, "Jennabanana" and sing rhyming songs to her in the bath. Jenna has long auburn hair that holds its curl even in rain, and a fair complexion without freckles.

Her lips are set in a permanent pout. She looks very different from Jill and me. We are dark-haired and dark-skinned, while Jenna looks anemic and has so many freckles on every part of her bod-

y—even her skinned knees—that people say Jenna looks like the milkman. We don't even have a milkman.

Jill and I are big enough to take our own tennis shoes off. There are two years between each of us and I often hear people tell Mum they don't know how she does it, caring for the children and that big house with Daddy working all the time.

I clutch my big white dog, proud but nervous, and shyly approach the brown recliner where Dad sits staring straight ahead at Gomer Pyle. Gomer yuk-yuks and Dad grunts. I know better than to interrupt Dad when he's watching TV in the evening. To bother Dad when he is occupied is to risk being sworn at and chased from the room or, worse, not running fast enough and feeling the sting of leather across the back of my thighs. Daddy is five years older than Mum, by his account. He is a small man with small hands and hairy arms and the recliner nearly swallows him.

His beard is grizzled, his hair cut in a buzz because he can't stand long hair on men. Jenna gets her pale, almost translucent skin from Dad, who spends most of his spare time in the basement tinkering with broken television sets and toaster ovens.

It's a good thing we're girls. Were we boys, we would be doomed to play in the band or join chess club, just like he did when he was our age.

He glances sideways at me and says, "Get me a beer, hon, will ya."

"Isn't it late to be having a beer?" Mum asks.

She wipes the corners of Jenna's mouth and Jenna whines that Mummy wipes too hard. Jill splashes water on her face at the bathroom sink and I probably should do the same, because Mum will take the first layer of skin off if she gets hold of me, but I don't.

I get Dad an Old German from the fridge. There is a quart of milk and a flat two-liter bottle of orange soda and I think 40 cans of Old German. Sometimes, Dad takes me with him to the distributor to get beer, and he buys me a cold Yahooo from the pop machine, a big red Coca-Cola refrigerator with a bottle opener on the front of it.

Dad says you'll not find a beer cheaper than "good Ol' German." Mum says Dad's so tight he squeaks when he walks.

I take the beer back into the livingroom. Next to the TV is a glossy yellow bean bag. In front of the bean bag lies a thick black snake. Its head is larger than my fist and the body fat, fatter than a bicycle tire and shinier. The bulk of it nestles under the bean bag. I'm not sure if it is real or a larger version of the little rubber snakes that Dad likes to scare us with. He keeps several varieties of rubber snakes hidden around the house, and I hate to fall for the trick again.

"Uh, Dad," I say carefully, biting my bottom lip. "There's a snake under the bean bag."

He pretends not to hear me.

"Dad, a snake—"

"Will you shut the hell up? CAN'T you SEE I'm trying to watch TV?" he shouts.

The snake lifts its head, and its pink tongue flickers in the phosphorescent glow of the television. I don't dare take my gaze away from the snake, afraid it will slither away and vanish into some dark corner of the house before Dad sees it and thinks I made up the whole story. I am sure it is real now and I tug frantically at the sleeve of Dad's undershirt.

"Dad, Dad, Dad, there's a snake, a snake—"

"Get the hell outta here! Go to bed. I'm watching the goddam TV," he shouts, raising his arm to shake me loose or hit me.

Mom walks into the room, wiping her hands on a thin dish towel.

"Frank, she's trying to tell you she sees a snake," she says.

The snake lunges forward and Mum and Dad both see it and suddenly Dad is on the sofa, jumping from one stockinged foot to the other like a man walking across hot coals.

"Jesus Christ!" he screams. "Christ Almighty!"

"Frank, will you get down off of the sofa? You're scaring the girls," Mum says.

Mum is not afraid of snakes or possums or anything. She was raised in a shack next to a junkyard, and when she was young, her job had been to keep rats from gnawing on the babies' toes at night.

The girls come into the room and I step in front of them, blocking them from the snake and from Dad, who is screaming and cursing and jumping on the sofa.

My mother remains calm, speaking slowly and clearly: "Now, Frank, get down from there. It's not poison. I'll just pick it up and—"

"No! Don't touch it! I'll get it, I'll get it DON'T WORRY, oh Jesus, Jesus I'll be right back," he says and jumps down, still hopping, and runs from the room.

He returns with a big .45 automatic pistol, fumbling with the safety, and I grab up Jenna and push Jillian into the bathroom. Before I shut the door and lock it, I see Dad back on the sofa and hear Mum, who is now screaming.

Jill holds her ears and chokes, but doesn't cry. I rock Jenna. Mum's screams are shrill and I feel nauseous from too much junk food and too much excitement.

"Put that goddamn thing away! Christ, Frank, what the hell do you think you're doing? Put that AWAY!"

Gunshots—one, two, three, four—I can't tell if there are more because my ears are ringing and Jillian is screaming and Mum is screaming and I lose count.

Then it is quiet, except for Mum's muffled sobs.

"You coulda shot the girls," she cries.

I wind Jenna's hair around my finger and unwind it, still rocking her. When I am reasonably sure the gunshots have stopped, I unlatch the door and peek out.

"Wait here," I tell the girls.

I creep up to the edge of the living room doorway. My Mother is still shouting and gasping. Dad appears not to be listening. He stands in front of the sofa now with one hand on his hip, the hand with the gun hanging limp at his side, surveying the severed body of the quivering black snake

on the green carpet.

Dad's back is straight and erect, and he looks taller than his five feet six inches. A Volkswagon commercial flashes across the TV screen.

I smell a hot odor, as if a pot of something had boiled over on the stove, and burnt flesh and urine. I think for a second that Jennabanana has wet herself on me.

"Mom, is everything OK?" I ask, my voice sounding squeaky and distant.

Mum pulls and stretches the dish towel as if she were making taffy.

"It's all right, just, just gather your sisters up for me will you, Honey, and get on up to bed. It's OK now," she says, sticking her fingers up under her glasses to wipe her eyes.

"Will ya look at that," Dad says, cautiously approaching the snake. "That's the biggest sonuvabitchin' black snake I have ever seen in my life."

"It wasn't poison," Mum says. "I would have just carried it outside."

"Bullshit," he says.

"Go on up to bed," Mum says to us.

"I'm going to call animal control, have them take a look," he says.

"Please, Frank," Mum says, "don't call anyone."

In the bathroom I undress Jenna and wash her bottom, leaving it bare, and I'm sure I don't get her clean because she doesn't so much as whimper. I wring out the washcloth and take it upstairs with me.

We walk in a row through the living room, past the snake, and I give Jill a little push.

"Do you see that?" she whispers. "The bean bag's full of snow!"

The bean bag is blown open on one end. Small white and red styrofoam balls spill across the floor. We are halfway up the steps and Mum leans over the snake and reaches down.

"Don't touch it! They have reflexes!" Dad says, shoving her. She shakes him off. She picks up the snake behind its head and picks up the other piece of the snake, which is closer to the TV, twitching. The snake drags along the floor as Mum carries it gently from the room.

My father's expression is smug, self-satisfied. There are gouges in the floor where the bullets went in.

I tuck Jenna into her Barbie bed in our room and order Jill to get into bed.

"You're not the boss of me," she says, scowling. Jenna is asleep in minutes, making sucking sounds in her sleep.

Jill, in the bunk bed above me, counts sheep. "Four, five, six, eight, fourteen, thirty, sixty-four..."

She falls out of bed regularly, over or around the rail, and we think she must be made out of rubber because she hasn't broken any bones yet.

I lay with my cheek pressed against the cool wall. The sheer curtains flutter in front of the window. A car spins gravel in the drive, then I hear voices, Dad's and someone else's. I am still awake when Mum crawls in cool and moist beside me.

I squeeze my eyes shut and breathe noisily, pretending to be asleep.

-Flipside

Dialing 911

by Janice Maruniak

A ball of white fire shoots straight up into the quiet, pitch black midnight sky. Explosions boom-boom-boom one after another. Building in intensity, searing heat melts everything as the raging fire spreads from the basement of the home to the once stately rooster weather vane on the roof peak. The east and west arrows bend grotesquely southward. Stinking, foggy smoke billows around and around, forming a blanket and laughing in glee at its new-found life. Windows begin to shatter, glass splinters launching into nearby trees that are groaning in agony from the scorching heat.

A nearby dog remains silent, cowering at the end of his chain and yanking on it to get as far away as he can. The evil red glow of the devil himself reflects in the mutt's bewildered eyes.

Finally, a hacking, bent-over man staggers through a side door of the burning home, gasping for breath, stumbling and groping along. The stench of burnt hair and scorched flesh makes him reel in pain and agony, yet somewhere in his semi-conscious mind he knows he must plunge further away from the now fully engulfed house.

Awakened by explosions and shattering glass, a neighbor rolls out of bed and throws on a pair of jeans and loafers. As he hits his door, he stops dead, the horror of out-of-control flames becomes etched into his face.

At that moment, he watches his neighbor fall to the ground, then lie still, motionless. Horror still on his face and fear choking his throat, he turns back inside his home. He frantically runs for the phone. Finding it, tears blurring his sight, the helpless neighbor punches the buttons.

Part of a call to 911 tells what happened next.

"My neighbor's on fire - no his house, his house is on fire - but he needs help. He's outside on the ground - the house is on fire - something exploded. Oh God, please hurry - it's spreading - he's not moving."

"Sir, please slow down. Where is the fire?"

"Here, I mean, at um, next door at 225 Miller Road - no that's my address, the fire is next door at my neighbor's. Can't you hear it? God damn it, hurry up!"

"Okay, sir, hold on now, I need you to tell me your name and your phone number. We're sending out the fire department right now."

Although this is only a hypothetical incident, it could very well become a real situation. And the vast majority of us who are untrained in emergency dispatching service would have difficulty making sense of such a phone call from a panicked

person like this one. Indeed, we probably would be unable to remain calm enough to know exactly what to do, what to say and which button to push to send out critically needed help.

However, emergency 911 dispatchers receive the proper training to ensure this knowledge, and the ones who work at Fayette County Emergency Management 911 seem to have everything under control. They have to be extremely efficient in their work; lives depend on it. That's why they are there.

However, according to an article in *Good Housekeeping* magazine, William Stanton, executive director of the National Emergency Number Association says the job of a 911 dispatcher can be so stressful - only that of an air-traffic controller is considered worse - that burnout is common. And with average annual salaries between \$16,000 and \$38,000, the length of service for dispatchers is generally about three to seven years.

Fayette County's dispatchers have been on the job for less than two years.

Craig Konopa, stationed at the ambulance console in the dispatching room, leans back in his chair, crosses his legs and tucks his hands under his chin. The 27-year-old Uniontown resident appears very calm and relaxed in spite of knowing his phone will ring any second, the person on the other end frantically asking for help.

The former military policeman says each of the dispatchers deal with the stress and responsibility in different ways. He decides his way is fairly simple. "I just go home. I leave work at work. And I don't even turn on my scanner anymore."

Shifting gears, Konopa slides back and forth in front of his console on a wheeled chair as he launches into a conversation about how people react differently under stress as well. "A mother might cut herself with a broken glass washing dishes and could be screaming her head off, crying and yelling. And then you could have another mother there with her 16-year-old son not breathing, but be very calm."

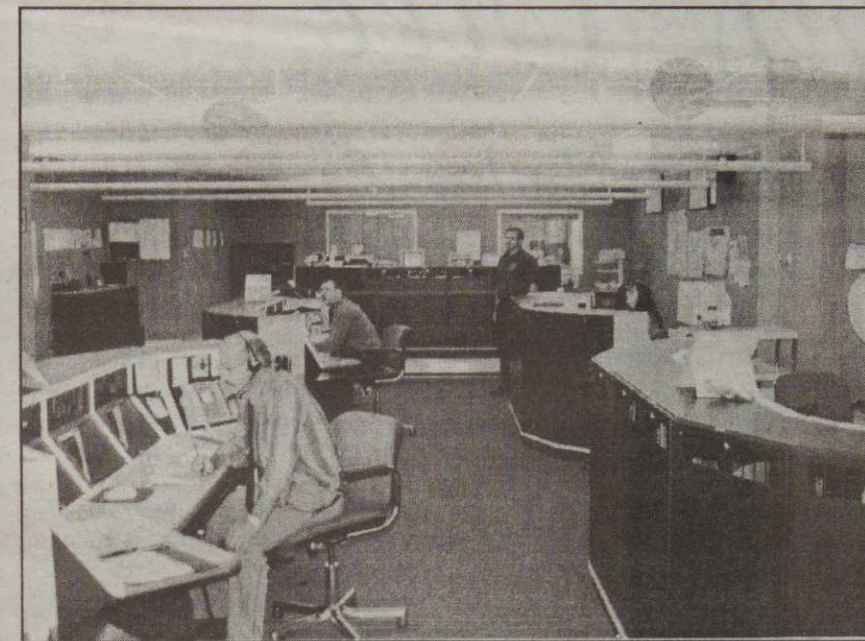
"A couple of weeks ago I had a 12-year-old daughter do CPR on her father because the mother was so hysterical. The mother was screaming so loud in the background that the 12-year-old had to actually tell her to shut up so she could hear me give her CPR instructions."

"People handle it different ways. It's amazing. Working here, we think we've heard it all, and then somebody will come up with something else off the wall that we'd never think of."

Konopa says he initially intended to utilize his dispatching job as a stepping

stone to a career as a police officer, but has decided to stay put. "It's an exciting job, although we don't get the glory like fire fighters do. Once they get out there, we're out of sight, out of mind."

This team agrees their weekend starts on Wednesday night. King, hesitating to listen to voices coming over the airwaves into his headset, says, "It seems strange, but that's when it starts happening, for



There are four full-time shift supervisors and 14 full-time and six part-time dispatchers who rotate four shifts round-the-clock at the center. Usually, there are four-person crews but weekends see the addition of a fifth person to handle the increase in calls.

Employee turnover has been practically nil; one dispatcher left to take a life-long dream job as a paid fire fighter. Most of the dispatchers have some previous experience in emergency assistance.

The dispatchers believe the good working relationship they have with each other helps relieve the stress. "We kid around with each other a lot," Konopa said. "Bruce had a whole head of hair when he started here."

The father of five children, Bruce King, 42, lives in Ohio, and is a little thin of hair on top. His grin immediately puts a person at ease, and his sincerity carries through his voice over the phone wires as well. The other three dispatchers on this crew constantly rib King about his tendency to misspell words, which somehow doesn't seem to interfere with his job.

He feels the same intensity about his job as Konopa, and doesn't appear to be affected by on-the-job stress either. "I do it for the excitement. I love it," the former emergency medical technician says. "It's an adrenaline rush."

Parked in front of another station in the center, fingers poised above the computer's keyboard, King monitors the fire console and seems well suited to be there. He is soft-spoken and there seems to be nothing hurried about him. At times, he pauses for just a second before answering a question, although this doesn't happen when he dispatches.

Answering his calls with confidence, he knows his job well. So well in fact, he jokes, "I come here to relax. With five kids, this is kind of like a vacation." The four dispatchers have a strong family commitment and often talk about their ties to home.

King feels this job could be too stressful for some people. Adjusting the glasses on his nose, he says, "You may have somebody on the phone yelling at you, you may have a cardiac arrest you're trying to deal with and give CPR instructions to, and you may have fire units or police units that you have to deal with... it gets touchy sometimes. You just really have to concentrate."

Waving his arm out toward his colleagues, he adds, "But when you are on a crew like this, you learn to depend on them. We all try to help each other."

whatever reason, and it goes straight through to Sunday." The only quiet time they see, according to King, is from 3:30 a.m. to 5 a.m. "And then it starts up all over again."

Some people might expect the heart of the dispatching center, the control

new systems-radios, telephones and mapping equipment-had to be brought in and installed. And to make sure everything worked and was integrated took some time." A monthly \$1.25 surcharge on county residents' telephone bills, which brings in around \$90,000 per month, provides funds for most of the center's expenses.

Building renovations began in early 1995, while the installation of \$2.5 million worth of equipment and wiring started in Jan. 1996. In fact, the renovations took so long, the dispatchers had been trained long before the center was ready for them. Consequently, they were sent to refresher courses which merged into actual hands-on use of the consoles and equipment when the time came to occupy the building.

The dispatchers use the Association of Public Communications Officials system to provide basic and advanced life support premedical arrival instructions. A catalog of cards set up near each dispatcher provides step-by-step instructions, specifying exactly what to do in a medical emergency. Examples would be CPR instructions for an adult, child, infant or person with a tracheotomy, choking or obstructed airway information or even instructions for childbirth.

The dispatchers were scheduled to begin updated quarterly training at the end of March in anticipation of a change



room itself, to be a massive area stuffed full of equipment. Not so. Large enough to provide an uncramped area, the room is efficiently laid-out. Four dispatcher stations, spread out in the middle of the room, take up the most space. Two call-taker stations wait at the end of the room for back-up use when needed on the weekends. Sitting on a platform at the head of the room is the supervisor's console. Natural light filters in through large windows, while a picture window permits visitors walking the hallway a glimpse of activity in the control room.

Occasionally, the dispatchers are recognized for their assistance. King scans his memory, recalling an elderly lady he took a call from. "She was with her husband who had died at home. I tried to comfort her. You try to be as nice as you possibly can and still try to help them. After the funeral was over, she sent a letter thanking the dispatchers who had helped her. And that means a lot, it really does, that someone recognizes that you do try to help them."

The center itself began operations in June 1996 after a lengthy renovation period to the former Metzler's department store building at 24 East Main St., Uniontown.

"The building had to be completely renovated," said Guy Napolillo, 911 coordinator. "All new equipment for three

new systems-radios, telephones and mapping equipment-had to be brought in and installed. And to make sure everything worked and was integrated took some time." A monthly \$1.25 surcharge on county residents' telephone bills, which brings in around \$90,000 per month, provides funds for most of the center's expenses.

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said quietly, "The most satisfying experience I had was when I used the CPR instructions for an 8-day-old infant. The baby did survive. Actually, it was the aunt who called and said the baby wasn't breathing. I got handed through three different people before I could give instructions. I finally got to tell the father to do the CPR, but it was the mother who actually did it."

Konopa takes a breath and gathers his thoughts before continuing. He said the ambulance had arrived at that point and the father hung up the phone. "A smidgeon of anxiety creeps into my voice. 'That can be really frustrating, when you don't hear what happens.' Just as quickly, the anxiety vanishes. 'The ambulance crews are pretty good about keeping us updated on conditions if we ask them to. But I did hear the baby crying before he hung up, so I pretty much knew he would be okay.'"

Not all calls are so serious. Konopa laughs about one in particular. "I had a little girl call and say 'My mommy's hurting my daddy.' She said her daddy's back was bleeding. So I got on the phone with the mother who said, 'Oh no, I just popped a zit on my husband's back.'"

Chuckling about a call he got from another little girl, he said, "She wanted me to send an ambulance or the police because her cat was beating up her hamster that had gotten out of its cage. The girl was crying; you could tell she was upset. Then the grandmother gets on and tells me the cat killed the hamster. And you could tell she'd been fighting with the cat because she was out of breath. But she said her granddaughter would be okay."

"Different things are emergencies to different people. I can't tell a person not to call 911 because it's not an emergency to me. We just have to sit here and figure out what exactly is an emergency. And you never want to tell a kid to not call 911. Then they will be deathly afraid to call, which is what I stress during public education."

The center does provide public education about its operations. The dispatchers have gone out to schools, scout meetings, senior centers and will talk to anyone who is interested.

They want to let people know when they call 911 what they can expect, and to get them familiar with the center. Konopa said it is important for kids to understand so they are not afraid to call for help. Tours of the center are also encouraged and can be arranged by appointment.

When visitors enter the building, an elevator lifts them to the fourth floor after they pass the scrutiny of a security



agency Medicine, who will both train with us to get this system up and running."

During a recent heart-pumping call, Konopa used the CPR instructions for an infant on one of his shifts. His expression changing to flat-out concern, he

guard stationed in the cavernous lobby of the building. The guard uses a special key to program the elevator to ascend to the fourth floor where the doors open to a receptionist. She greets visitors and

Continued on page 33...

The Wolf Tree

by Ellie Mathews
Art by Kenny Musko

Leon is watching a yellow afternoon hover over the valley. Fine pollen hangs weightless in the air, gracefully thumping its nose at the law of gravity. Gravity. "Where does it go when you need it most?" he wonders.

Leon's main goal at this point is simply a vague hope that his heart will tap out a healthy beat for another forty years or so. He's also thinking it's time to clear out of Annette's place. He's bunked there since his second night in Diamond Springs. Leon stands on the wooden steps of the Wolf Tree Tavern and breathes easy. The mountain air smells sharp like fresh leather.

He plans to give his notice tonight, after a long dinner and a short bath—or will she serve a dinner of short ribs in a long gown? It seems unlikely, but he can't predict. It's August. The thermometer needs icing down and the air conditioning in his pick-up is on the fritz. He heads out toward her place with both windows and the throttle wide-open.

There's a new breed leaving the city these days. Leon Delecroix left twenty years ago. He dropped out before earning the philosophy degree that his father wanted him to finish at Dartmouth. The new immigrants have studied more practical subjects. They've made it big in something small like silicon chips or micro engineering. They're discovering what Leon has known from the start, that BMWs and Range Rovers don't really get a person where he needs to go. A handful of these post-neo-retro-nouveau back-to-the-landers are finding their way to the Tweed Valley. They're looking for something important. In a way, Leon's already found it. The wide-eyed enthusiasts from Seattle bring their extra-virgin olive oil and their Ralph Lauren boat shoes with them. In time, they relax and replace their goods with whatever is available locally. Things change.

Leon's been in the Valley only since April, but he's stopped off in many other places like the Tweed. He knows why the urbanites are cashing in their stock options. They're exchanging a couple of decades of deadline tension for all the time in the rest of their lives. They wear flannel shirts and build big log houses. They donate computers to their kids' grade schools and get involved. These people come to stay. Leon's been thinking of moving on.

The Tweed Valley is as pretty as it gets, the ponderosa pine trunks are as big around as a dining room table. If Leon were the sort to settle down, it'd be in a place like this. Mountains divide Washington State. On the eastern slope, is a small slot falling away from the cascade crest, punctuated along the bottom by a green line called the Tweed River. Off of US-2 and around the hills shaped like marshmallows, most signs of civilization fall behind. Houses are topped with colored metal roofs, farmsteads where horses wait for the grass to ripen dot the land, and rows of mailboxes stand expectantly.

Measure off eight miles through a scatter of weekend cabins and encampments through a landscape where granite patches jut through burlap hillsides. Go past the sin of an old coal mine, and there is Diamond Springs. It's built around a once-elegant resort where they still sell real pies. The hotel porch looks grand but those old-growth boards are starting to go powdery where they've

taken the weather. Across the street is the Wolf Tree Tavern, that's where Leon works.

He started at the Tree in April, polishing the varnished bar until it gleamed like hot butterscotch. Leon's always kept a place clean. Between ranch work and ski bumming and maybe a little construction work here and there, he's learned to stay on top of a task. He's managed a carefree existence by being efficient and unencumbered.

It was still early his first afternoon when Annette showed up. A few people sat around one table. A couple of guys were shooting pool. The ashtrays were empty. Leon had a row of glasses sparkling in the lineup at the mirror. He had been told to expect a crowd of loggers around four o'clock on weekdays. They'd head in for a brew, or two or three, on their way home. Later in the season, when hot weather would close the woods down, they'd drink at home, twiddling their thumbs—those who hadn't lost them on the job, that is.

Leon's mind was on auto-pilot when Annette walked in that day. He glanced up but didn't really see her.

Annette sat at the bar. Nothing's unusual about a 51-year-old woman with a frayed ponytail asking for a draught. She started talking. At first, Leon didn't think she was addressing him, but the bar-

hoisted her schooner in a silent toast, then took a drink. "Today you get your turn. You're on." She held out a salt shaker like an interviewer's microphone. "Everyone's curious 'bout the new guy at the Tree." Her voice was husky and playful.

"My father designed tires for Goodyear," he began. "I'm pretty sure that's as boring as it sounds . . ."

"Hey, this isn't your story; it's your old man's" Annette interrupted.

"Hold on," Leon laughed. "Let me get into it. Patience." He held up both hands, palms out. "It is my story, because either my old man, as you call him, was very, very good, or maybe not as hot—I don't know—he got transferred a lot. Maybe it was just because industrial America doesn't need to think about the human cost of yanking a family around from place to place.

"The upshot is I grew up in Brazil, Germany, England. I used to speak three languages. One of them, I believe, is used here by the locals, on occasion. Mother—my parents were never Mom and Dad. And to you, they'd be Mr. and Mrs. Delecroix, not Gerald and Margaret—Mother always hired the best schools for me. I learned my lessons and all that, but the the whole capitalist scene put me off. I checked out. Refused to make anything

of myself. Basically, I've never put down any roots." Leon dropped his chin and rapped his knuckles on the washboard stomach under his crimson polo shirt. "They must still be coiled up in there somewhere." He looked up with a grin. "Homelessness works fine except for managing my mail."

"You sound positively hydroponic," Annette offered.

"More like thistle-down. You know, something gone to seed," Leon answered with a wink. "I usually manage to land on fertile ground, though."

"Where're you staying?" Annette asked. "I mean, have you installed yourself here in the Spring?"

Leon stopped to draw a pair of beers for the pool players. "I'll tell you what," he said when he turned back. "Let's alternate. You give me your first chapter now."

"Okay, that's fair. But I'm going to run mine backwards and begin at the end," Annette said. She shifted on her perch and waited a minute. "You see this eye?" She tapped her left cornea with a matchbook. Didn't blink or flinch. "This is the reason I just quit my job."

Leon answered the phone. "Anyone here named Whitey?" he called out and handed the receiver across the bar to a man dressed in black from the table group before turning back to Annette. "You were saying something's wrong with your eye? I guess it does look kind of funny." He stepped aside to check it out in profile. "Oh, I get it. Is that thing glass?"

"Bingo. A bogus blue orb." Not a very good match, is it? I've thought of different colors to go with what I'm wearing, or even getting some polished spheres of malachite or lapis—or tiger eye. How would that be? Would that freak people out?" Annette's smile revealed a good-looking set of teeth with flashes of gold in the back. "Actually, I'm not even very used to this glass one. I wore a patch for a year."

"I don't get what that has to do with your job." Annette waved him away. "At first, I told people I hit my eye and it popped. Or I'd say a bear clawed it out. Truth is I got too close to a man who was having a stroke. My ophthalmologist as a matter of fact."

"How does that work?" Leon urged her along.

"Well he had the drops poised over my eye, you know—the dilating anesthetic? Right at that particular moment a cerebral hemorrhage gripped him—or more to the point, gripped me. See this little scar?" Annette pointed to a thin white line on her lid. "That's where the dropper tore it. Anyway in the spasm of this nice old eye doctor's last living moments, his thumb found a home in my orbital socket. Two weeks later, a Seattle surgeon had to remove the whole mess."

"Yikes! Did you live up here when all this took place?"

"No, I was in Wenatchee. County seat and all that. We don't have any eye doctor in the Springs. That's where my husband was teaching community college—or had been teaching, but he's the chapter before this."

"So, you're from this general area."

"Who cares where I'm from." She exhaled. "I'm here now."

Leon sensed a shadow under her words. He didn't want her to lose momentum, just when she was getting going, so he pulled her another draught—on the house. Scotty had said to use his discretion. "What about the job?" he asked gently.

"The job." She seemed to rev up again. "Well, I've been an X-Ray tech off and on. Most recently as Cascade General. You know where that is? That's where you'll end up if you have an accident around here. Or if you're just plain old. They have a nursing home in one wing. It's a good facility, good for trauma, considering its size.

"Anyway, I've been taking glamour shots of grandmas with broken hips and buffed up climbers whose busted bodies pour out of helicopters, the ones that scoop people off Dragontail Peak up there." Annette gestured out the window.

"Then, too, since we're the only facility between here and the Pass, we get all the people whose Fords lock horns with a Chevrolet. Of course, the logging community routinely culls itself with chainsaw carelessness." She turned to see who was in the bar. "Survival of the fittest if you ask me. Those guys don't usually get sent to X-Ray, though."

Anyway, I quit. I got my settlement. Between that and my husband's life insurance, I don't need the income, as long as I'm frugal. And if you figure it by the price per pound on my eye, looks like I got a bundle."

"Widow, huh? You're not with anyone, now?"

"Don't try to make a move on me, cowboy. Men haven't worked out too well. I have friends, but I don't have lovers." Annette was a bit in her cups by then.

"Don't take it personally. What'd you say your name is? But hitting on you is the farthest thing from my mind right now."

The place was starting to fill up, and he excused himself to stoke the popcorn machine. Annette drifted over to visit at one of the tables by the window. The audio rose to a reassuring texture. Pool balls clicked and boot heels thudded on the wooden floor, blending with the outbursts of laughter to make a sweet music, warm band heart-filling like the sound of the Tweed River washing rocks in its shallows. Leon switched off the TV volume then teased a sad song out of the juke box. It was Tuesday night at the Wolf Tree.

A stand of Douglas fir grows fast and tall. Straight, fissured trunks are bare of branches from the ground to their high tufted crowns. Though they compete for light, they hold each other stable. If you cut all but one, the tree that remains will likely go over in the wind. A wolf tree is different. It grows solo by nature, separate from the rest. It'll thrive on thin soil. All that open space must agitate the tree, because it goes all to limbs, low and bruising on the earth. You can't get close to its trunk. It's a prettier tree than those bunched in the forest but near worthless if you cut it down. Any logger knows that.

The first night of tending bar, Leon had parked his pick-up behind the tree for which the tavern was named. After work, he made his way across the parking lot under a new moon. The truck idled for a moment as Leon reconsidered the invitation Annette had tossed off on her way out of the bar. He was pretty sure she was genuine when she'd

specified he'd be sleeping on her couch and not in her bed. And if that were true, it suited him just fine. It was bound to be more comfortable than the back of his truck at the state park.

He found her place with a light left on and a welcoming note on a stack of folded bedding in the living room. "Hey, Cowboy," she wrote in bold angular letters. "No boots on my couch. See you in the AM, XOXO, A."

In the morning Leon carefully refolded the linens and took inventory of Annette's natural habitat before she appeared from behind her paneled door off the living room. The house was a lot like its owner, a bit worn here and there but fundamentally well built and classically designed. The furnishings looked intentionally assembled, bright and cottony.

When his hostess emerged in belted jeans and a well-ironed shirt, Leon was impressed at how totally together she was in starting her day. No bathrobe, ratty or otherwise. No yawning. No scratching. He even wondered whether she'd been to sleep at all. The view into her room was of a bed made with military tautness. White curtains sighed in front of the open window.

"Who's in the picture?" Leon pointed to a framed snapshot of two men dressed for serious mountaineering.

"The one on the left's my son," Annette answered. "Name's Storm."

"Storm? As in weather?"

"That's his name. He's twenty six. We used to have a lot of fun together." Annette touched her finger to the image in the photograph as if she could brush away a veil. Her son's face was no bigger than a dime. "Then his dad died," she continued. "Storm was nineteen at the time. It hit him real hard. I sent him to the University of Washington. He majored in business and came home a Republican."

"How about you?"

"I don't vote."

"No, I mean did it hit you hard when Storm's dad died?"

"Oh, that." Annette curled her dark hair

Continued on page 32 . . .



tender thing was new; he hadn't mastered the conversational rhythm at that point. He folded the local weekly he had stashed under the bar and picked up on what she was saying. He focused on her more closely. Something was funny about her eyes.

He couldn't tell if she was a local—not that he cared. He didn't need to pigeon-hole everyone. It's just that it came so easily for him to size a person up and curl around their story. Maybe that's why Scott Duncan, the owner of the Tree, said right away that Leon was born to tend bar.

"Leon, hell, you can add him to any crowd. Don't stir. Leon'll mix," Scott once said. "Sort of a universal donor, socially speaking. Give him city folks, lawyers, even bratty little boys—you name a type, and Leon'll tap in real smooth."

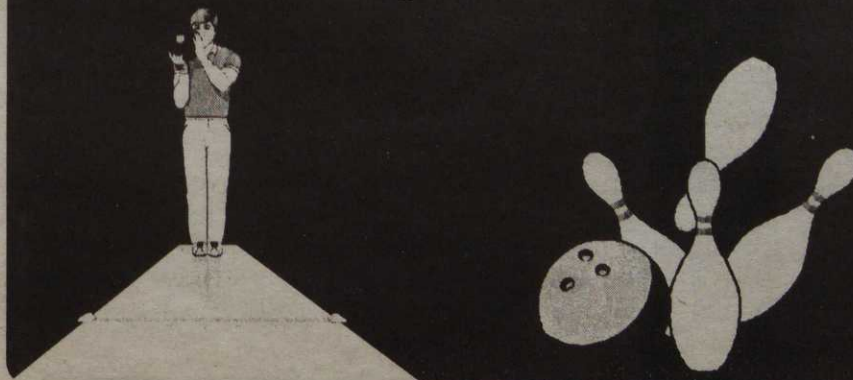
Annette was cagey. She got the jump on Leon. She sat tall on the leather-look stool and aimed her odd eye across the bar. She made a small smile as if she knew a secret, and said, "I'm not telling my story 'til I get yours. Quid pro quo." She

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At a Table of the Metro

by Hugh Henneidy

How these chairs shine
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candle and lamp

Polished wood slanting back
in lines as clean and curved
as bombazine black

O slim conjoined staves
upholding the slim bridge
of the back

Songs of pastoral care
in this dark resting place
this day

Illustrious serpents
bringing the garden back
by way of art

Day After Betrayal

by Henry J. Tokarski

She expresses her grief by:
dusting, mopping, shining
A wild sighing grunting dance,
from attic to basement.
In her trail, angry ammonia vapors.
Surging, swirling, lashing,
sting, stifle, and gag
my attempts at apology.
I lay stricken until awakened
by the fragrant aerosol
touch of her victory,
carried from floor to floor.
While sitting together
in a clean house,
she glares at the spot
she could not remove.

Baudelaire's Addictions

by Mark Scott Bagula

Baudelaire died addicted, hopping mad,
a bored idealist vampiring time, ode-ing it all
to a woman possessed by a capricious moon.

A black moon feeding her green eyes.
Eyes to endlessly die under-
the petty deaths of autumn leaves-

after a long, torturous, summer kiss
left his false calm on the edgy edge of action.
He pasty palmed a pause to psalm her

immortal. Steel evil shaking worlds,
starting with her backside, smiling
his cherish, a churlish jester half-smile.

Mad as hell.

Drink

A rage-freak, a shooter of wings,
nest-burner, church-fornicator,

grass-crushing
tree-topping parasatanist.

Don't Drink

Broke painter offering his umbrella
to a girl trying newspaper, her head
swatched in the day's acid, soy ink
roseating her cheeks. Ex-con uncle
quietly ambitious, sipping Darjeeling
& misting his basil/marjoram/tarragon
cedar windowboxes while nephew races
Sega's Sonic the Hedgehog through
a hundred rings ka-ching! ka-ching!

Drink

The I-Ching's ignored: Everyone's an enemy,
a memory, a flashback, an insult. They've
got to learn; manage-god says "teach them."
I ignore holidays, smart & wise to carry
& sleep with my .40 Smith & Wesson auto.

Don't Drink

I dream of writing bestsellers to buy asylum
for every unpoached mountain gorilla.
My lover smiles, eyes void of fear &
apprehension and I feel godlike making
that smile, removing all fear, defeating malice.

by Fernand Roqueplan

PEOPLE

BY FERNAND ROQUEPLAN

AMBITION'S THE KEYWORD AND CAPSTONE: EVERY CAFE
A WAITRESS POISES OVER A PAD, SOMEONE THINKING
HE'S BETTER NEEDS PAMMED EGGS & KONA DECAF—
LOOK AT HIM—WE SHARED A ROOM IN CULVER CITY
ON HIS WAY DOWN AND MINE UP. HE'S STILL A PLAYER—
KNEED-IN FACE, PITS REEKING, BENZENE SUIT AGLOW—
STILL PINCHING BIG IDEAS FROM HIS FLAT POCKETS,
STILL GIVING IRENE ORDERS, HIS BITTER-HALF RINSED
IN MISERY, BLEACK ICE-MASK FRAMING ASHY TEETH.

THERE'S BUD DEMANDING FRESH BODDINGTONS, ANGRY
THE KIDS HAVE LEARNED TO LIKE IT. "MANCHESTER'S
A SLUM," HE SNARLS AT A PLUMP SHAVED BERSERKER:
"YOU'D GET YOUR SLOBBY ASS KICKED THERE." BUD'S
DESCENDED FROM COLLIERIES & NAVVIES BUT WENT TO OXFORD
THEN TAUGHT DRAMA AT IOWA BEFORE BEING FIRED IN '93
FOR "TURPITUDE." ASHAMED OF HAVING TAUGHT
HE TELLS THE KIDS WHO ASK THAT HE'S A JANITOR.

WHY TELL THE TRUTH—IT'S BORING LUBRICATION. ROUSSEAU
WAS A SELFISH PRICK, BUT A TALENTED ONE. HE OVER-
EMPHASIZED MEMOIR; A KARMA POLICEMAN REAR-ENDED,
IN THE END, BY GRAFT. THERE'S A LITTLE KNOWN FACT
ABOUT PARK-CROW BEHAVIOR AFTER BREAD'S THROWN:
THE CROW-CHILDREN CHASE THEIR PARENTS, CAWING
PLAINTIVELY TO BE FED. THOUGH CRUSTS LITTER THE TURF
THEY GO CRYING ONLY FOR MORSELS SPOTTED
IN PARENTS' BEAK. SEEMS THE WORLD'S AN OPEN GRAVE

RIMMED WITH STONE-BEIGE ICE-BENCHES SPECKLED
WITH MOHAIR & LINT WHERE THE PARISHIONERS, FREED
FROM LENT, HAVE SAT TO SMOKE & COMMISERATE & FROST
GRASPED THEIR COATBACKS AND TROUSERSEATS AND SKIRTS
UNDER THE BENCHES HOTHOUSE DAFFODILS WITH MUSHROOM
GRAY PETALS BRUSH OLD BANANA SKINS, RUBBER-BANDED
STEMS CRUSHED AND FROST-BLACKENED. WHO BRINGS

DAFFODILS TO A FUNERAL? I LOVE THE IDEA OF A CORPSE
LIKE MINE ADORING DAFFODILS, BABY'S BREATH, THE COLLAR
SPRAYS OF EMBALMED CROCUS AND HOPS.

Old Men

by Randy Huntsberry

Old men get crazy in the fall
what with the smell of winter coming on.
Such days we peddle faster and faster
your New England country roads
lined with maples and elms
still holding on for dear life
to their tinted leaves.

Passing along at your leisurely pace
we come upon some young boys
playing touch football in an empty green.
Jug says *let's take um on*.
You say *do whatever you want, but I'm not waiting*
and head on up the road,
probably cause you can't bear to watch anymore.

We circle back and issue our challenge.
The boys accept
with a slight tone of indulgence.

After a brilliant lateral and near score on opening kick-off,
we try our old down-and-over-the-middle-pass.
Six points! No problem.

On offence, the boys keep finding the open man
(there are so many of them!)
and slowly advance to our goal line.
We stiffen
just as some older boys appear on the sidelines
ready for a game of their own.
The younger boys slide off one direction,
we in the other. Season's over.

Condensed

by Scott Murphy

Night and horsemen, horses tracking
the mud paths of the forest.
Day comes late it seems, but comes,
the chattering wrens prepare for it.

"Where are we going?" Alric asks.
"To a fight," I say. "Dragons
will draw our blood."

Says Alric, "Let's turn back."
But I say "No. It's sweet and needful
that we die this day. We have no cause,
but we have a leader."

FLIPSIDE GOES TO MARS?!?

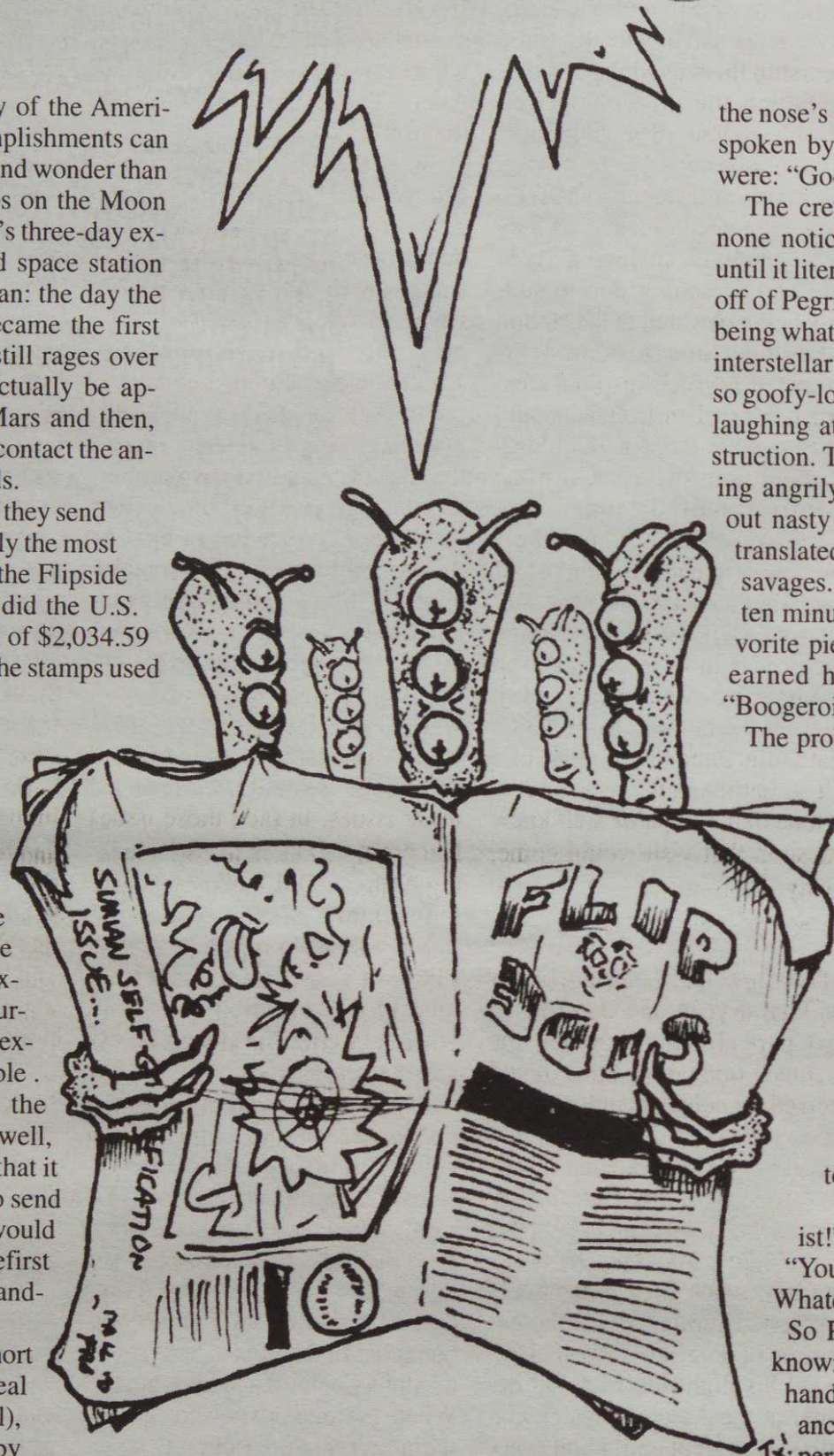
Looking back on the history of the American Space Program, few accomplishments can ever be ranked higher in honor and wonder than Neil Armstrong's first footsteps on the Moon or Larry "Space Mack" Klinger's three-day experimental "booty call" aboard space station Freedom-but one sure as hell can: the day the crew of the S.O.S. Flipside became the first humans (though some debate still rages over whether this description can actually be applied to them) to set foot on Mars and then, three days later, to accidentally contact the ancient civilization of the Voidoids.

"Why, for the love of god, did they send those losers to Mars?" is probably the most common question asked about the Flipside mission of '08. Why, after all, did the U.S. government spend a grand total of \$2,034.59 (and that's counting the cost of the stamps used to mail the crew's acceptance letters) to send a bunch of magazine editors, writers, artists, and assorted goof-offs and hangers-on to Mars-a gaggle of folks most of whom had never left the Mon Valley of Pennsylvania, much less the planet, before-when they could've sent a crew of highly-trained expert astronauts? The answer is surprisingly simple: highly-trained expert astronauts are not expendable... and considering how risky the Mars mission was going to be, well, the Big Boys at NASA decided that it was much more cost-effective to send a bunch of rubes that nobody would really miss should they fly facefirst into an asteroid or crash while landing on the Red Planet.

So, to cut a long story really short (we only have two pages to deal with this whole situation, after all), the staff of Flipside was chosen by a long, arduous selection process involving several slips of paper and a hat, packed into a spaceship built mostly from parts scavenged from the old Mir space station which the U.S. had purchased for a case of Stolichnaya vodka in '99, and sent packing for Mars with the instruction not to return "until you've found something interesting."

The trip out was looooooong and intensely boring-and the crew of the S.O.S. Flipside quickly grew tired of one another's perpetual company. However, before a full-fledged mutiny could arise, they arrived and set about deciding on a landing site. Commander-in-chief Maryellen didn't want to land at all: "Let's just drop a flag on it from orbit and head home," she said; "I still have to finish that damn article on those coke ovens in Upper Asscrack Creek, PA... n' I don't even want to know what my babysitter's gonna charge for watching my daughter for the last sixteen months!" Pegritz, however-the Mission's Chief Astrogator and Alien Contact Specialist-demanded that they at least fly down to check out that cool "face" in Cydonia. Said he: "At the very least, we can take some neat pictures to send to all our fans back home."

The crew took the lander down to Cydonia the next day, and tragedy nearly struck when lander pilot Kenny Musko attempted to land on the tip of the Face's "nose," which promptly collapsed under the weight of the lander, causing the vehicle to tumble down and become lodged in



the nose's left nostril. Thus the first words ever spoken by the first humans to walk on Mars were: "Goddamnit!-now what do we do?"

The crew was arguing so vehemently that none noticed the alien standing behind them until it literally picked up a rock and bounced it off of Pegritz's helmet-which, Pegritz's temper being what it is, nearly precipitated Earth's first interstellar war. Only the fact that the alien was so goofy-looking that Pegritz instantly burst out laughing at it saved our race from certain destruction. The alien immediately began gesturing angrily at the crashed lander and spitting out nasty alien words that, years later, were translated as being: "Way to go, you ignorant savages. You haven't even been on our planet ten minutes n' you've already ruined our favorite piece of artwork!" This incident also earned humanity our present nickname: "Boogeroids."

The problem now stood... How to communicate with this alien creature? As always when such a conundrum struck the staff of Flipside, they put in a call to their mentor Alan Natali. He'd know how to handle this situation. However, being that the Mars Mission budget didn't include enough overhead to finance a call from Mars, they tried to reverse the charges-and Alan loudly told them to go to hell, 'cause there was No Way he was paying \$6,500 per minute just to hear them whine n' cry.

"You're the Alien Contact Specialist!" Maryellen growled at Pegritz then. "You communicate with him! Her! It! Whatever!"

So Pegritz tried-but he had no way of knowing that, to the Voidoids, holding a hand out in friendship was actually the ancient gesture meaning "Your mother performs outrageous reproductive acts in public utilizing silly mechanical aids." Which is why Pegritz not only became the first human to ever attempt contact with an alien being, he also promptly became the first human ever to have his ass kicked senseless by an alien being.

"Well, I guess it's up to me to fix the situation-as usual," Maryellen grumbled. An idea quickly formed, and she proceeded to dig an issue of the Flipside from the crashed lander. She approached the alien, opened the magazine to its staff block, and pointed to her name and then to herself. The alien nodded and, when she pronounced her name, it answered back flawlessly.

Contact had begun...



Well, as it turned out, the Voidoids weren't really Martians-they actually came from a star cluster in the Lesser Magellanic Cloud. No one has yet been able to figure out why they sent a colonization fleet to our stellar system (the aliens actually seem embarrassed to admit their reasons for this, though scholars seem to think that ian a. bennett had something to do with the effort), but when they got here a few hundred thousand years ago and discovered that Earth was home to a primitive but recognizably sentient species, they decided to let us hu-

mans keep Earth while they colonized Mars. For one, they liked the color of Mars better. And two, they figured that it would be much more entertaining to sit back and watch Earth develop.

So they built huge underground cities from which they rarely ventured, and waited and watched our race slowly rise from a gaggle of grunting, violent cavepeople to a worldwide civilization of grunting, violent media addicts. And you have no idea how surprised they were when the Flipside showed up-they'd figured we'd nuke ourselves into extinction before we ever made it to Mars... But the Voidoids got quite a kick out of the Flipside-and especially that strange, magical tome which the leader of the Flipside expedition was using to facilitate communication between the species.

Before long, the Mars Mission was conversing pretty well with the aliens, learning their long, boring history and negotiating with the Voidoid High Command to get the aliens to buy a fullpage ad in the next issue of Flipside. It soon became known that the Face on Mars wasn't a signal to humanity that the Voidoid culture existed on Mars, but simply a piece of artwork created a few millenia ago by one Efilnikufesin the Easily Amused, certainly the Voidoids' most overlooked and laughed-at sculptor.

It also became known, fairly early on in the communication process, that the Voidoids liked the concept of Flipside waaaaaaaayyyy too much.

Seems the Voidoids had, over the centuries of watching humanity raise itself from the muck, developed quite an appreciation of human art. Well... the lower end of human art. They scoffed at DaVinci's "Michelangelo" and declared Good Will Hunting to be "the supidest bucketful of sentimental human pee ever dumped on a movie screen"-yet they absolutely revered Andy Warhol, the soundtrack to Conan the Barbarian, Monty Python, South Park, and Saturday morning cartoons from the '80s. Introducing Flipside to them was tantamount to handing over an instruction manual on how to build a nuclear weapon to a fifteen-year-old-and giving him a case of plutonium, to boot!

At first, Commander Maryellen was quite flattered when the aliens requested that Flipside provide them with enough copies of their latest issue so that every Voidoid on Mars could have his/her/its very own copy... But flattery soon turned to dismay when she realized that the aliens were... well, a little too interested-before her very eyes, she could see the ancient Voidoid culture slowly being subsumed by Flipside. The aliens began quoting "Sound & The Query" clips to one another in daily conversation, building public monuments to the staff members (Pegritz, of course, thought this

was extremely cool), and running around demanding death to all poets who write odes to "duckies and bunnies." But, still, neither Maryellen nor Pegritz nor any other member of the staff/crew bothered to speak out against this... mainly because the Flipside offices back on Earth were packed solid with undistributed copies of the previous issue and, well, Maryellen wasn't about to turn down this golden opportunity to get all of them the hell out of there.

By the time the crew of the Flipside had to leave to return to earth, the Voidoids had practically come to worship them as idols - a situation which the mission viewed with either bemused bewilderment or flatout hilarity.

Pegritz and Kenny Musko didn't even want to leave, as they were seriously suffering from acute ego poisoning due to suddenly being elevated to the station of "Earthling Stud Boys" by a certain sect of Flipside-inspired alien women. Maryellen and ian literally had to subdue them with chloroform and drag them back to the recently-repaired lander. The Voidoids didn't want their newfound heroes to leave, of course, but they saw the necessity of it - the staff had to get back to their offices in order to put forth the next issue of Flipside - and so they sent the humans forth with a great fanfare and the promise of a visit sometime in the near future.

None of the Flipside staff knew how soon that visit would come, or why...



The crew had been home for less than a year, and had for the most part already forgotten the seventeen minutes of fame they'd received for being not only the first humans on Mars but also the first humans to have contacted a sentient alien species (seventeen minutes which were promptly eclipsed by the latest AI Gore Non-sex scandal), when they collectively woke one morning (with the exception of Pegritz, who had resumed his night job as an ad designer at the Asscrack Creek Gazette and so slept until noon every day) to find every television channel and Internet chatroom packed with pictures and commentary on the gigantic alien ships that had just pulled an Independence Day and showed up in the skies above several major American cities. The Voidoid ships were freakin' huge and, it soon became apparent, carried every living Voidoid from Mars.

Had the Flipside done something to piss them off?

Were they here to eradicate humanity and finally conquer earth?

Was their entire species just taking a long-overdue vacation to earth?

Or had they just come to kidnap Will Smith, and had used this ploy as a means of luring him out of hiding?

Actually, they had come looking for a specific human... Alan Natali. The ancient, much-revered (yet still curiously little-known) Flipside advisor.

Why, was anyone's guess. The United States government immediately volunteered to help the aliens find Alan, but the Voidoids declined the offer - they really wanted nothing to do with any human governmental institutions, as they viewed them with the same sneering contempt that they viewed the editorships of Harper's Weekly and The New Yorker. Instead, they went to the only people who they were sure could find Alan - the staff of the Flipside themselves.

When the alien liaisons came to Maryellen's door, they were greeted with a quick glimpse of domestic/editorial anarchy: papers and research notes strewn everywhere, envelopes stuffed with poetry and fiction submissions stacked in all corners, her daughter Alysha flopped on the sofa, watching Barney and scribbling on the back of a manuscript which analyzed, in great detail, the decline of western civilization in light of the vast proliferation of "specialty cheeses." Maryellen suddenly materialized from amid the clutter and asked: "Okay, I knew you were coming - now what do you want? Didn't you get all those back issues we sent out to Mars?"

Yes, the Voidoids had received those issues. In fact, those issues had prompted them to come seeking Alan... Did she know where to find him?

Maryellen shrugged: "No clue. I haven't seen Alan for months. I think he might be dead. Why don't you ask Pegritz - he always knows where everyone is."

So the aliens went off in search of Pegritz, and found him late that night, sitting at an allnight donut shop in Uniontown and hitting on a bunch of drunk bar chicks, bragging that "them aliens taught me how to do... ahem, certain things that I guarantee will blow your booze-addled minds to all the way to Alpha Centauri and back again." When the aliens showed up, the women ran and Pegritz, irate, shouted: "What the hell? Go right ahead n' invade if you want, but why you gotta go scarin' off my women!?"

The aliens asked him if he had any clue where Alan Natali might be.

"Got me," Pegritz shrugged. "Last I heard of him, he went bass fishing in the Upper Adirondacks... Rumor was a family of Bigfeet captured him. If I were you, I'd go ask ian a. bennett - he lives somewhere near Alan, I think."

The next day, the aliens showed up at ian's house and knocked for twenty minutes before he answered the door. When they asked how to find Alan, ian asked back: "Why do you want to find him?"

"Ummmm... Personal reasons," the lead alien mumbled.

"Like what? He owe you money?"

"No... Uhhhhh. We just need to find him."

"Is this a vital need as in the need for shelter, food, and good music, or is this merely a passing fancy - better defined as a 'want' - which has suddenly taken on the strong appearance of a need? If I remember correctly, you're a pretty impulsive race, as a whole."

The aliens conversed amongst themselves for a moment, and then the spokesbeing answered: "We... um, well, uhhhh... we kinda screwed up our entire civilization and we'd like Alan to fix it for us."

"How'd you do that?" ian asked.

"Ummmm... Uhhh, well, it's complicated."

"You attempted to restructure your entire society around the chaotic staff structure of Flipside, and then attempted to create a religion based upon the supposed 'Creation Myth of Flipside' published a few issues back in order to provide the mythological glue to hold said new society together, right?"

"Uhhh. Yeah. Pretty much." ian shrugged. "Happens to the best of us. If you're lookin' for Alan, he lives on Graywater Street in Brownsville. Third house on the left after the brokendown fire hydrant. Just make sure you lock up your UFO when you get out, or someone'll steal it."

So the Voidoid search team went immediately to Alan's address... and found the house locked up, all the lights shut off, and a sign reading: "I AM NOT HERE" tacked to the door. The aliens decided that maybe Alan really had gone on a fishing trip, or was off in another state interviewing some down'n'out ex-football quarterback for a feature article in Sports Without Pictures, or away on some other strange errand that only Alan could wind up saddled with. So they waited.

And waited.

And waited.

Eventually, after several weeks, they went back to the Flipside and asked just where the hell Alan was. Of course, none knew. Even at the best of times, Alan was a haaaaard man to get a hold of... At this point, the Voidoids decided that perhaps it was just better to forget that they'd ever encountered humans or Flipside and just hustle on off to another Galaxy where they could just start over. It was either that or destroy the earth, but they figured that leaving humanity alive to suffer the consequences of their own bad art was a much worse punishment.

So the Voidoids left, never to return... and never knowing that Alan had only moved three houses down from his past abode and had driven past them every day, laughing and wondering why that stupid bunch of aliens had sat around on his old front porch for three weeks.

-Flipside

Wave of Terror

EXCERPTED FROM THE NOVEL BY UKRAINIAN
BORN FEDIR ODRACH
TRANSLATED BY ERMA ODRACH
ART BY KENNY MUSKO

On the edge of Pinsk stood a large school. Before the school was an old, rundown fence and beyond the fence a road, full of puddles.

Kulik stood by the classroom window and gazed at a sprawling lilac bush brushing up against the pane. Hundreds of drops collected on its branches, and for some reason he fixed his attention on a drop larger than the others. When a gust of wind swept in from the east, like a tiny ball, it fell to the ground. This prompted thoughts to weave through Kulik's mind:

"Yesterday . . . there was a regime, and today there is another. Yesterday's toppled and disappeared just like that drop. And today's? Will it also one day fall?"

The rain intensified and began to shower upon the window like the fine seeds from a poppy; dark autumn clouds loomed overhead and painted the sky a heavy lead-gray.

To the right of the school stood a small, shabby wooden cottage with a sloping straw roof. A medium-sized garden plot ran parallel to the road, and Grandfather Sieman, dressed in a drab peasant overcoat buckled at the waist, paced back and forth. He took small, indecisive steps. A long white beard reached past his chest, and from time to time, as he raised his head to watch the sky, his eyes welled up with tears.

Kulik watched from his window and muttered under his breath. "There is no more hope, old man. The weather is reflective of our new regime. It is as if God has turned his back on us. There is no place for the sun. Clouds have triumphed — there are clouds in the sky, clouds over the earth, clouds in our souls."

The old man hobbled over to the gate and for the longest time stared to the east where the road shot in a straight line to Moscow; in fact, as of late, all the townspeople had got into the same habit. Everyone knew that evil came from there. This time in history was one filled with danger and uncertainty. Too many strangers had taken an interest in Pinsk.

Suddenly a rumbling sound erupted from the road. With great determination two mangy horses pulled a wagonful of strangers toward the south end of the street. The wheels and the sideboards were splattered with mud, and the floor

planks were cold and soggy. After laboring past the school, the wagon wound its way behind a neighboring tool shed and disappeared.

"More trouble," Kulik shook his head. For a brief moment he set his eyes on the ruts in the road and began to contemplate the new regime: first the Red Army is sent in to intimidate the citizens, then bands of agitators follow, equipped with shrill propaganda speeches. Like swarms of locusts they see in through the smallest of cracks and infest not only the town but outlying villages and settlements. With black shoulder bags, navy riding breeches and sagging leather boots, they muscle their way in, professing to be long-awaited

Lenin Clubhouse by now. There's going to be another meeting."

Dusk quickly began to set in. The rain continued to hit against the window. As Kulik turned into the adjoining room that acted as his office and switched on the light, the rain suddenly came down in a violent downpour. Fierce thunder exploded overhead and the panes rattled. Sinking into an arm chair, he threw back his head, and staring up at the ceiling, fell deep into thought.

He couldn't get Pinsk out of his mind. What had it become? Where did its glory go? It had so readily succumbed to a brutal, insatiable power, bowing and bobbing to its every whim.

sition five, maybe ten minutes, and taking several long, deep breaths, suddenly he became revitalized. Reaching for his overcoat and cap, he made for the door and walked out onto the street. The rain had subsided to a mere trickle.

He set out for the city center. The roads were full of potholes, and the small wooden houses lining either side showed signs of decay, even abandonment. On occasion, light from dim oil lamps escaped through tiny curtained windows, where faint, barely perceptible movement could be detected, but not much else. Further along, coming upon the Jewish quarter, he passed several inns, all stuccoed, two stories high, and built in the shape of match boxes. Peasants traveling to Pinsk from surrounding villages to sell their wares in the marketplace would often come here to spend the night in exchange for eggs, grains and other products. These inns, always bustling with life and activity, had now become silenced. The windows had their panes knocked out, the walls had become cracked and stained, in some places even showing bare laths, and over the doors, now boarded and padlocked, the respective placards had been torn down. The extent of destruction and desolation had a profound and agonizing effect on Kulik. As he continued down the road, everywhere he looked was more of the same.

After crossing several intersections, Kulik finally found himself in the city center. Turning left, he entered Lahishenska Street, a lovely, broad, tree-lined avenue with shops, restaurants and government buildings. He recalled as a young boy coming to Lahishenska with his father and strolling up and down its walkways and lanes, admiring the fine architecture and basking in the hustle and bustle of city life. Passers-by wore wide smiles upon their faces and greeted each other happily. Kulik had always enjoyed his visits here; it was a welcomed escape from the monotony of village life.

But now Lahishenska was overrun with army trucks, armored cars and tank units; they roared nonstop in either direction over the rough surface of the red-pink cobblestone, their blinding headlights tearing into the night. Kulik stood back and watched in anger and astonishment. The entire city had become transformed. Militiamen in long gray



liberators. On their heads they wear forage caps, their faces partially shaded by upturned visors. They holler out to passers-by: "You people here have your eyes concealed underneath your caps, but we are honest and sincere. Only a true Bolshevik can look you straight in the eye!" Kulik stepped back from the window. "The wagon has probably made it to the

Pinsk had become a lost city. It were as if it had landed at the bottom of a raging inferno.

The deeper Kulik delved into these thoughts, the thicker the air in the room became. He felt dizzy and began to perspire all over. An uncontrollable anguish took possession of his body and his head dropped between his shoulders like a limp cabbage. Sitting in this po-

overcoats and satchels under their arms whirled past him, small groups of women rushed in and out of buildings, chattering urgently, pulling large bundles behind them, and shabbily dressed laborers going to work in nearby shipbuilding yards or metal working factories, carrying lunches in newspaper wrappings, spoke excitedly to one another. Everywhere he turned, on building walls, on fences, in entranceways were picture posters of Stalin.

Kulik pushed his way along the sidewalk trying not to look at anything or anyone, overhearing bits and pieces of conversation, all of which was in Russian. No one took notice of him and he felt a stranger among strangers in a strange city, one that had once been near and dear to him. Almost overnight Pinsk, the beautiful ancient port city, had undergone a complete metamorphosis.

After walking to the end of Lahishenska, Kulik turned right and sauntered onto the town square. He came upon a magnificent stone church built in the rococo style. Its tower, in particular, sported elaborate curves that were twisted and rose with painstaking irregularity. The intricate plasterwork on the numerous arches reminded him of a box of exquisite jewels, opulent, graceful, and exotic. Kulik did not know the entire history of this church, but what he did know was that just before the outbreak of World War II it had housed Polish Jesuits, and before that, prior to the first world war, it had been in the hands of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

His mind began to drift back to his childhood, when he was a young boy of about six or seven and had come to the square with his father for the first time. He recalled looking up and being mesmerized by the tower that seemed to go on forever; it radiated vibrantly and majestically against the flesh of the cloudless blue-green sky. At the top of its onion-shaped dome, which was covered in sheets of galvanized iron, he recalled a golden cross jutting upward and twinkling in the bright afternoon sun. Never before had he seen anything so splendid.

And now this magnificent tower was in ruins. A bomb had ripped off the east wall and damaged the others beyond repair. Mounds of dirt and rubble lay on the ground, littered with scraps of paper and old, empty whiskey bottles. The remainder of the church, although still somewhat intact, had been boarded up with a placard erected in the front yard reading "future home of the *Regional Voyenny Komissariat*." The glorious church that had endured centuries, was no more.

Burying his head deep inside his coat collar, Kulik stumbled over debris and wandered out of the square. Although there was activity everywhere, all normality was gone; Pinsk had become a living death. Many of the inhabitants had new faces, and familiar ones had undergone disturbing transformations. Old friends had disappeared without a trace. Entire city blocks had been obliterated, and well-known landmarks vanished as if into thin air. Pinsk had become a haunted city, its history crushed by one heavy blow. Kulik walked as if in a bad dream. Unprepared for the measure of devastation that met his eyes, like a ghost he zigzagged through the scorched streets going nowhere in particular.

As he entered Kievskaya Street, now renamed Sovietska, he passed Red Army man after Red Army man patrolling the streets, propagandists propped up on wooden crates hurling standard Soviet slogans at their audiences, workers putting up red banners everywhere they could. The more he walked, the more disturbed he became. Traffic flowed heavily and nonstop from all directions. Glancing up at the street signs, he tried to determine the swiftest way out of the busy city core. He wanted only one thing: to escape the madness and chaos around him.

Turning down various side streets and crossing intersection after intersection, he hastened along trying to think of nothing. When he crossed a small laneway

which turned at an angle, things became rather quiet. Walking five, maybe ten minutes, finally he was able to grab hold of himself. With his hands in his pockets and taking several deep breaths as if to fortify himself, suddenly and to his great dismay, he came upon a massive building made of stone. He gasped with horror. It was the Zovti Kazarny, the newly established NKVD headquarters. It stood before him like a great fortress, tall, impenetrable and forbidding. The walls were high and made of thick yellow brick, and small, barred windows looked down onto a bare courtyard encased by a wrought iron fence with barbed wire strung along the top. Although the building was sealed shut, Kulik swore he could hear noises from within: the clicking boot heels of the NKVD men making their way up and down the corridors, the thud of heavy doors, the plaintive cries from the dungeons. Briefly scanning the facade, he hoped for a light to appear in one of the openings, to see movement of some sort, but everything remained black and silent. And suddenly he had a strange feeling that he was not alone, that he was being watched from the upper levels. Not

peoples." Flipping through a wad of papers on a stand before him, clearing his throat, he went on, "We will start off this lecture with a brief introduction to the Byelorussian language, and then we will concentrate on the Great October Revolution."

Kulik scribbled something on the top page of his notebook. His hand felt stiff and he found it difficult to keep pace with the lecturer's words. Flicking his gaze about the theater, his eyes fogged and he felt a throbbing at the back of his head. A cold sweat prickled his spine. His neighbor to the right, a dark-haired, shabbily dressed young man shifted uncomfortably, then found his way to the edge of his seat, squinting his eyes and craning his neck. At first glance, Kulik assumed the man was so taken by what the lecturer was saying he did not want to miss a single word, but upon closer examination, it became evident he was having trouble comprehending the Russian language.

Kulik returned his attention to his notes. After jotting down several lines, suddenly he felt someone nudge him rather sharply on his left shoulder. Flinging himself around, he came upon a government offi-



cial dressed in a long-sleeved khaki-colored shirt and crudely spun gray woolen trousers. With a pair of deep-set blue-green eyes, the man stared fixedly at him. At first Kulik wanted to ignore the interruption but when the official signaled sternly with his head, Kulik got up and followed him out into the corridor. It was only when he heard the tapping of his own shoes against the gray concrete floor that he was seized by a sudden dread. What was going on? Why was he being summoned, and by whom?

The abruptness of it all made him tremble, and he soon fell into a state of distress. Black clouds were rapidly moving in. He was well aware innocent people, particularly of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, were being arrested en masse, then executed or exiled to the northern stretches of Siberia: scientists, writers, artists, educators, all were being branded "bourgeois nationalists," "conspirators against the Soviet government," "dangerous elements to society" and so forth, and eliminated. Was it now his turn? Was he about to be dragged to his doom? He told himself not to jump to conclusions.

Escorted up two flights of narrow wooden stairs, he was led into a large, dingy office with hardwood floors, a high ceiling, and small boxlike windows covered with grime. Behind an oak desk sat Yeliseyenko, Superintendent of Education. He thumbed through a pile of documents, and after pulling out several sheets of typewritten pages, leaned forward and filled a heavy fountain pen from a small bottle of blue ink. Looking up and taking a sip of water from a glass on the edge of his desk, without saying a word, he looked directly

Continued on page 36 . . .

What to Expect When in Normalville

by Noele Hornyak
Art by Derek c.f. Pegritz

The good old-fashioned American town. The place where everything is ordinary. A quiet suburb with two-story brick houses lined by white picket fences. Daddy works a nine-to-five job while mom stays home with the kids and the family dog. The family owns a minivan which takes numerous trips to soccer practice and ballet lessons. The main family objective is to be just like the Joneses next door. This is Anytown, USA. Normalville, right? Not Normalville PA though.

Normalville, located in the mountains of southern Pennsylvania, a few miles south of Ohio Pyle, home to the area's best whitewater rafting, boasts a small rustic camping site where only the true wilderness lover can feel at home. Normalville is far from the suburbs of any city and even further from "normal."

Normal for me was not necessarily the two-story house with a white picket fence in the suburbs. I came from a very rural area where, in most cases, my friends' mothers couldn't afford to stay at home, so they worked. Many of my weekends, while in high school and when I returned from college, consisted of attending house parties hosted by friends whose parents had left for the weekend.

We spent a great deal of time running amok in Pittsburgh or going on short trips to look for the best parties. Although I never lived close to town, whenever I went into Pittsburgh, I could blend in well and most of my friends could say the same. I would have called ourselves average American teenagers who clustered around average American places and did average American things. The most unusual people I've ever encountered were those occasional people at parties who had a little too much of whatever they were taking (alcohol, drugs, or otherwise), had wiggled out a little too early and had to be driven home before they upset the rest of the crowd.

I always looked for adventure and loved taking outdoor camping trips whenever possible.

So, a few summers ago, when three of my older male friends decided to go camping and invited me, I was ready to go. We decided to go to the secluded camping area near Normalville because we thought of ourselves as true campers. Plus, my friends wanted the space for target practice with their new rifles and handguns and privacy from the policemen and game wardens questioning the scratched-off serial

numbers on their weapons. These three guys loved to show off their "manhood" by lifting weights and shooting big guns. That summer I was in the prime of my teenage years, old enough to have a good time, but still young enough not to care about the consequences.

On a sunny Saturday afternoon, my friends showed up at my house a little after 12:00. We loaded my gear into the car and headed off on our way. We started down Route 66. About 15 minutes into the journey, one of my friends lit a bowl and we passed it around. After stoned calmness set in, I stopped paying attention as the highway turned into small roads, and the roads wound through endless small towns or threaded wooded valleys. Around 3:00 p.m., we pulled into the gravel parking lot of a

small wooden establishment just on the outskirts of Normalville. Its planks were splintered and peeling dark blue paint. Labels from beer bottles covered the dark brown wooden door, and a weathered plastic sign hung on the front wall proclaiming, "Hunters Welcome!" We were thirsty for a beer so we decided to see if I might pass as someone of legal age.

As we walked inside, the brightness of the sun's rays left me momentarily blinded. When I started to regain my sight, I looked to my right. Two ancient wooden pool tables crowded the small open space allowing room for only one small table squeezed against the back wall. I jumped when I looked on the walls and found a dozen or so animal heads mounted



on the walls, all seeming to glare at the pool tables. I shuddered, shook my head, and stepped farther inside. Four old men at the bar turned and stared at us. To combat their rudeness, I stared back, allowing my eyes to soak up the scene before me.

Dressed in dirty, well-worn overalls and faded red flannel shirts, the men themselves seemed to be nothing more than average drunkard hicks. Each wore mud-caked work boots and sported a frayed hat adorned with either a Chevy or Ford logo. The old man closest to us prized a good tooth in a crooked grin beneath a mountain of fuzzy gray facial hair. He thoughtfully ran his tongue across it as his eyes bore into us. Frightened, I joined my friends, who were already seated at the bar. I tried my best to act cool, nonchalant and, especially of legal age.

"What can I get you guys?" asked the bartender. My eyes widened. The petite, dirty-brown haired girl before us couldn't have been more than 13 or 14 years old. Her messy ponytail hung limply down her back as she attempted to flaunt a chest smaller than my own to boys half the age of the old men she, no doubt, was accustomed to serving.

"Three MGDs and a Rolling Rock for the lady," said Bill, who at 23 was the oldest in the group, and the only one of us who had ever been to this area before. Silence overcame the bar as the bartender in her tight jeans and tied-up shirt stared at him for a full minute as if in disbelief before turning her back to get our drinks from the cooler. I slid my glance sideways and noticed the four men, who had gone back to their huddle, staring at us again, even more intensely as if to

say, 'You do not belong here.' Only then did I see the men firmly grasping bottles of Milwaukee's Best Beer in their chubby, calloused. It was my turn to stare in disbelief. I turned to Bill. "Did you know they made the Beast in bottles?" I asked. He looked at me, one eyebrow raised, "What the hell are you talking about?" So I motioned to the four old men with my eyes. Upon looking over at the group, he broke into a wide grin. "Whatcha know?" he said, shaking his head as he patted my shoulder. I still couldn't believe Milwaukee's Best came in anything but kegs and cans for poor college kids like ourselves. I imagined this to be big

spending for these guys.

Bobby Joe would insist, "No, no, give Billy Bob the best of the Best. He shot a squirrel before the rest of us today. He deserves only the best. He deserves a BOTTLE!"

We finished our beers, bought several MGD six-packs to last us the rest of the afternoon, and left the strange darkness of the bar and its patrons behind for the bright afternoon outside. We piled into the beat up blue Honda Accord to head toward the campsite. Our vehicle belonged to Ben, the second youngest in the group. It was a sad piece of metal that obviously had seen better days, but Ben was convinced it could make it up and down the dirt mountain path we planned to traverse during the evening.

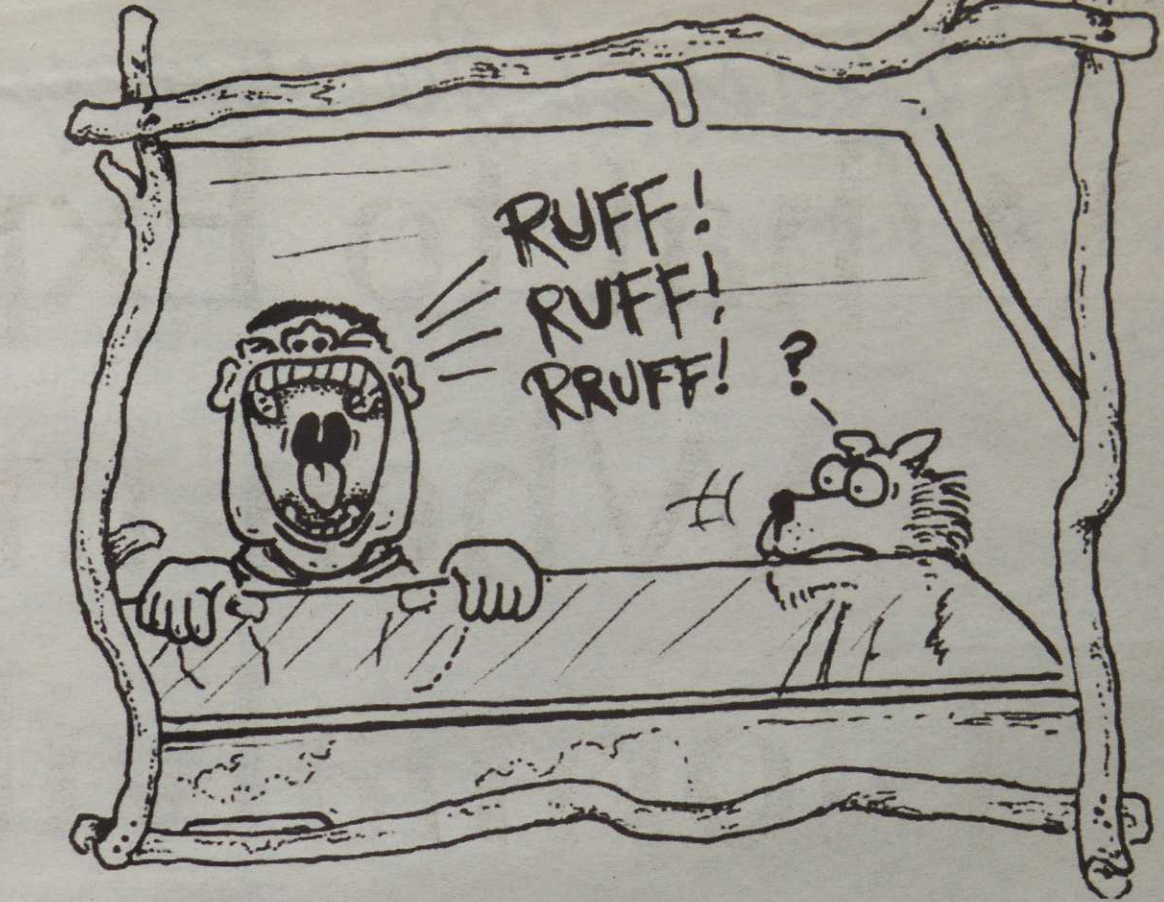
Upon rolling into town around 4:00 p.m., Bill said he wanted to stop at the general store to pick up some supplies before going on to the campsite. We pulled into the wide gravel driveway of a white house. Dirty paint peeled from its side. Above the red screen door was painted a faded wooden sign that said GENERAL STORE in red letters.

The four of us hopped out of the car. A lovely sight we must have been to the townspeople. I looked something like a hippy with my long blonde hair and a flower that Bill had presented to me earlier stuck behind my ear. Bill, if I hadn't known him, would have frightened me with his 6'4" build full of muscles and freshly shaven head, which made his blue eyes stand out more. Ben could have passed as Bill's younger brother with his similar build and electric blue eyes, but he kept his hair in that George-Clooney-short-layered style that was so popular that summer. And George? Well, he killed one too many brain cells smoking weed and snorting cocaine and often had a vacant look in his large brown eyes. If he was making a point, he would wave his thin arms in the air and compulsively tuck and smooth his wavy brown hair behind his ears. He usually strolled along as though no one in the world could hold him down.

Looking something like the Monkees, we walked across the low porch, which was actually nothing more than a couple wide planks nailed across the ground with rusty railroad ties holding them. We decided to get only the necessities. We ransacked the store, being careful not to kick up any dust from the dirt floor. I made the grocery list, checking off each item mentally as I went along:

- Matches. Check
- Container of Kerosene (20 gallon drum) Check
- Lucky Charms. No Lucky Charms cereal. (Corn Flakes will do.) Check
- Sugar. (corn Flakes suck) Check
- Plastic Silverware. Check
- O.J. (some brand I'd never heard of) Check
- Milk Che- (wait. This milk expired April 7th. It's May 24th.) DRY CEREAL. CHECK.

"Judging by the smell of this place," I said leaning



over to George who had a curious look of revolt on his face, "I think they use this outdated milk to help keep down the dust clouds."

George managed a weak smile before pleading, "Let's go wait in the car while Bill and Ben pay." I was starting to question exactly how "normal" Normalville was anyway. The people I'd seen—the strange clothing and bizarre habits—were nothing short of spooky and I started to wonder if the Addams family lived here, too.

I nodded and we bolted outside, gulping fresh air when we reached the porch. While we cleared our lungs, a rusty green pick-up truck pulled up with a family inside. The heavyset mother wiggled out and eyed us suspiciously as she wiped her greasy brown hair from her eyes with the back of her chubby hand.

George and I walked toward the car on the other side of the pick-up. The woman did a fine job of flattening us against the house as she squeezed past us on the porch. Repulsed, I brushed the paint chips from my left shoulder and my hair. George shook his head flinging paint chips from his shoulder-length hair, and we continued walking to the car.

As we passed the pick-up, I made the mistake of looking in. A sweaty, dirty boy about six and his mangy white mutt looked out at us. The boy's father sat behind the wheel, staring straight ahead, apparently uninterested. The dog just bared his teeth, but the little boy screwed his face into a devilish grin and barked. The boy actually barked at us and continued to relentlessly bark until we reached the car and were

out of earshot.

I jumped in the front passenger seat. George plunged in to the backseat on the opposite side. We locked the doors. Wide-eyed and panting, I gulped down the instinct to scream or cry.

"Did that just actually happen?" I whimpered.

"No," he answered. Bill and Ben joined us a few minutes later with a couple bags. As George and I relayed our story, Bill and Ben listened, intently looking over their shoulders at the truck behind us. As I described George's gallant dive into the car, they broke into fits of laughter.

"Real tough guy," they snickered. George hid his head and mumbled, "Can we go now?"

Still enjoying the joke, Ben put the car in gear. We made a left and continued through town, which consisted of nothing more than a cluster of run-down houses.

About five miles out of town, we made a left turn off the main highway onto an unnamed one-lane asphalt road. An abandoned oil-well pump, rusted and unused, loomed at the corner of the intersection. Its great joints lay victims of the creeping orange rust which spread like wild vines across the machinery. Piles of coal lay beside the well, shimmering in the afternoon sun. The tiny road wound through the woods. Here and there clearings made room for houses.

Continued on Page 34 . . .

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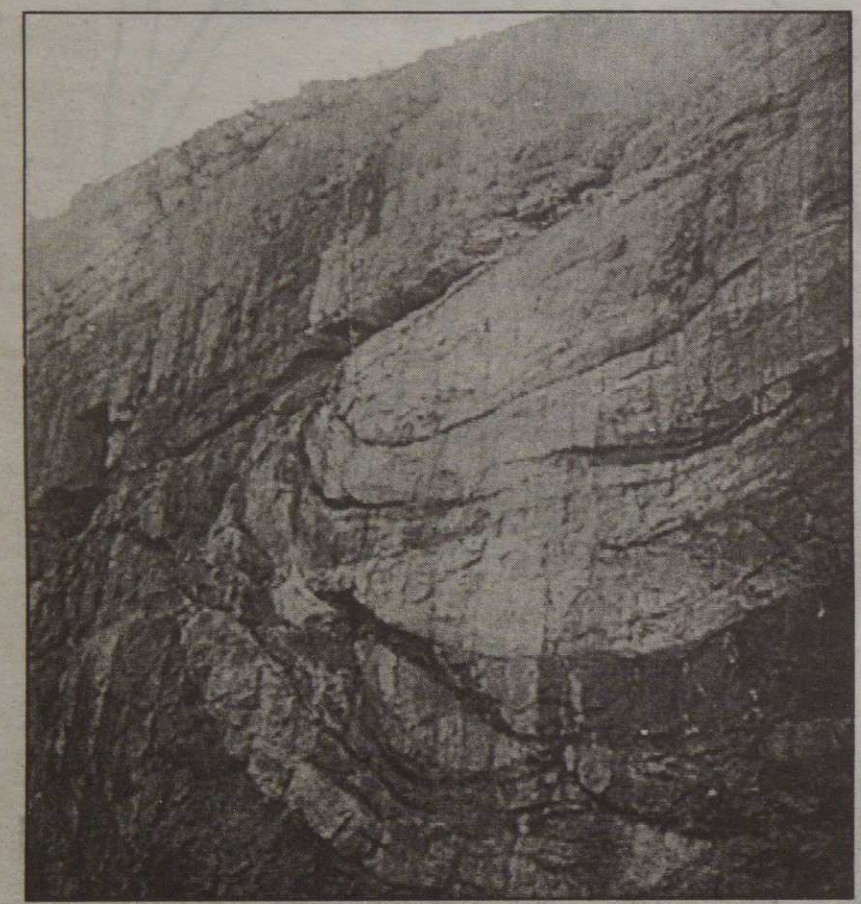
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A Visual Journey through



Twenty-six hundred miles is a long distance to travel in 8 days, but that's what we did. There were twenty three of us, loaded into three University vans, with all of our luggage, and boxes of rocks. That's right, rocks. Our classes were Field Work in Earth Science and Seminar in Oceanography, but our classroom reached far beyond the walls of Frich Biology Building.

In eight days we passed through Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

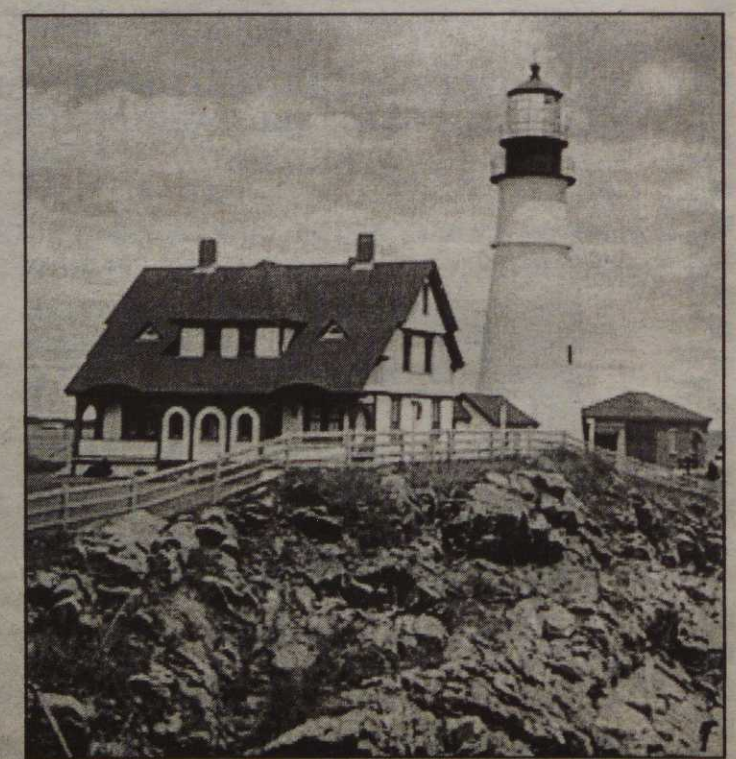
This page (counter clockwise from top).
Roadside Geology. Spring Mountain has literally been cut away, to allow the passage of traffic on I-80 in Pennsylvania. This road cut reveals excellent examples of sedimentary rock strata.

Naraganset Bay. This lighthouse is located in Beavertail State Park, on Cannanicut Island, RI. The island sits within Naraganset Bay.

A beach cliff at Nausette Beach, Cape Cod, MA. To the far right in the photograph, a fence crosses a road which used to extend much further. Erosion is causing the face of the cliff to fall; Cape Cod loses three feet of beach each year.

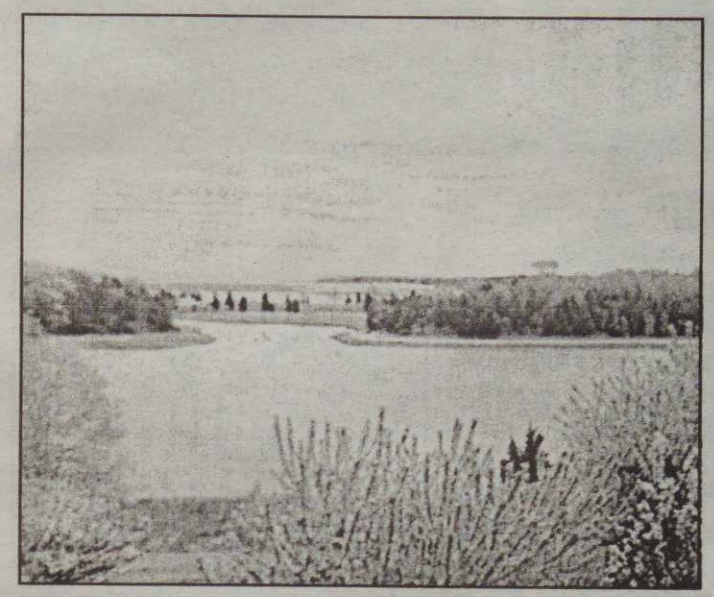
Cape Elizabeth, ME. This is one of the most famous lighthouses of New England, Portland Headlight, Cape Elizabeth, ME. The rocks at Portland Head Light are part of the Cushing formation, of Jurassic-Triassic age.

The Old Man of the Mountain is one of the most famous sights in Vermont. The rocks on the side of this mountain seem to form the profile of a person, looking out over the White Mountains.



the American Northeast

Photos and Text by Nichole M. Dulin



This page (clockwise from above).
Cape Cod National Seashore. "The Salt Kettle" is just outside the visitor's center at Cape Cod National seashore. This glacially formed pond is filled with salt water, although there are many other kettles on Cape Cod filled with fresh water.

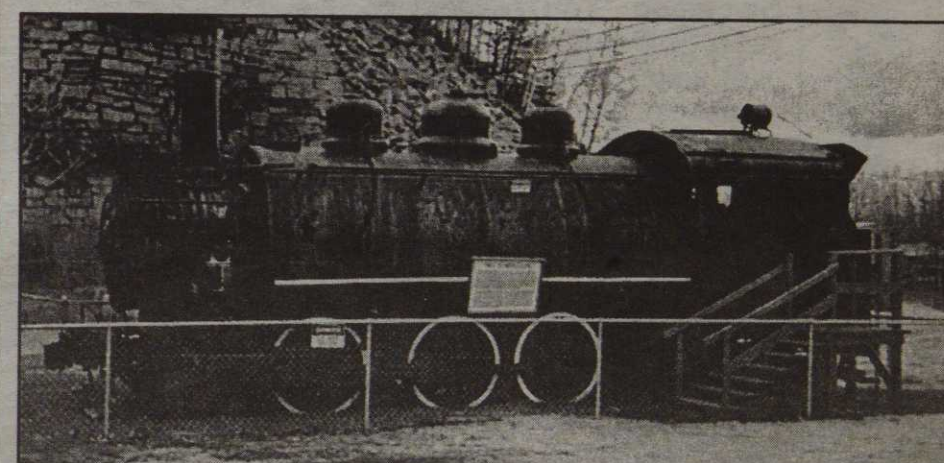
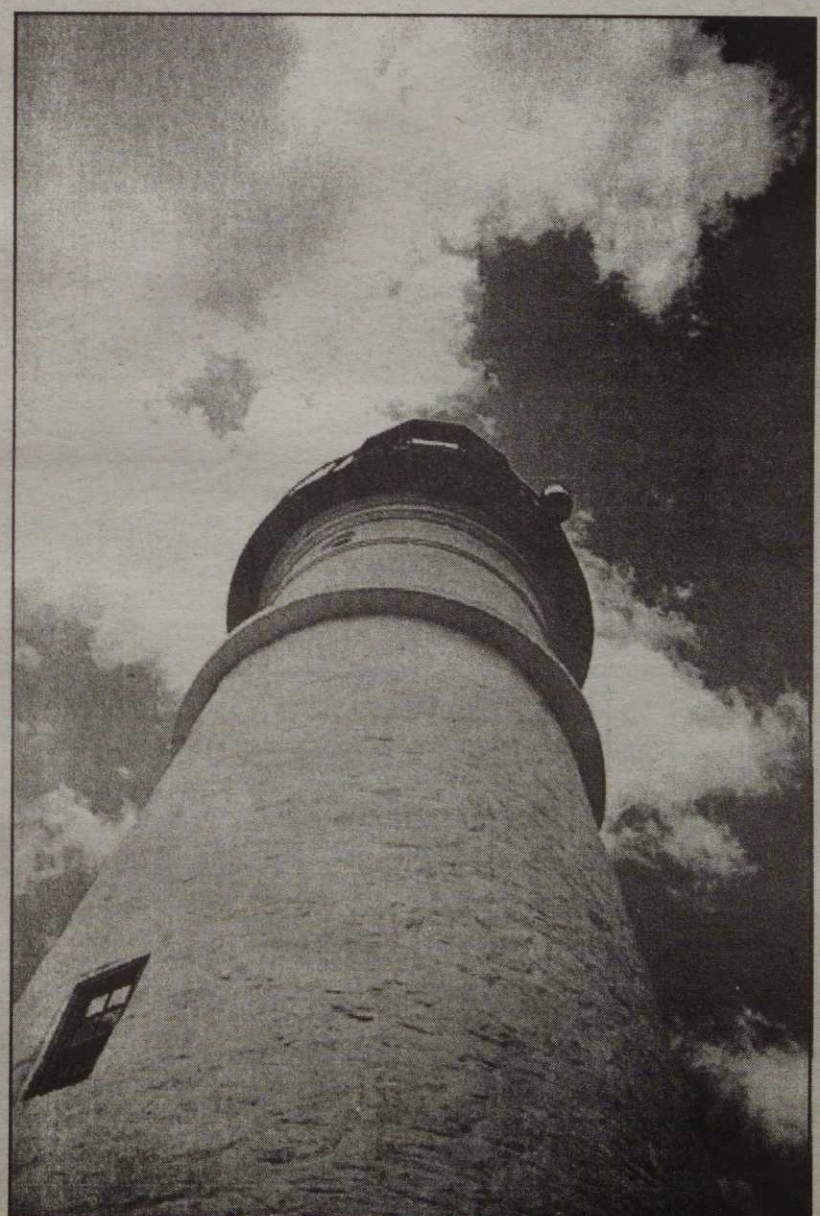
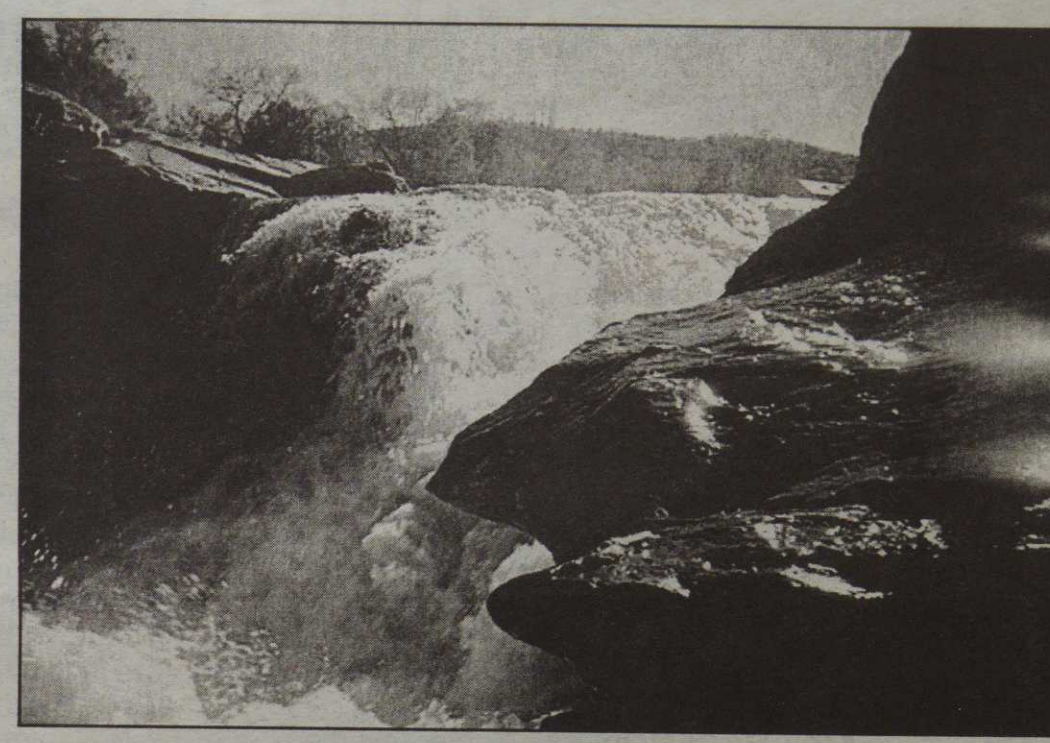
Shelburne Falls, VT. The massive rocks, located at Shelburne Falls, are as impressive as the actual falls.

Shelburne Falls, VT. The rocks have been smoothed by the constant flow of water from the falls. The rock striations are visible as well.

Rock of Ages locomotive. This steam locomotive was once used to carry massive blocks of granite out of the "Rock of Ages" granite quarry in Barre, VT.

Palisades Cliffs. Below the Palisades Cliffs in New Jersey lies the Hudson River. On the other side of the river is New York City.

Cape Elizabeth, ME. Another view of Portland Headlight, Maine's oldest lighthouse.



THE FLIPSIDE HORRORSCOPE

How to determine your sign . . .

Owchieoo — You were born on a Tuesday after six p.m. Your mother's maiden name begins with the same letter as your oldest living high school teacher's cat's name, and you can not readily name more than twelve United States presidents without a minute to think about it.



Aghmyeye—The numbers of your date of birth, when converted to the Augustinian calendar, and then into Roman numerals, do not spell out a pronounceable word. You have never worn polyester, except as an undergarment, and you are blue-green color blind.



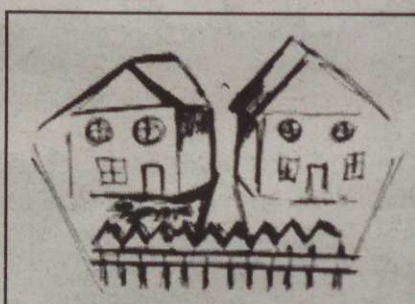
Manthatsmarts—You or any member of your family is a hemophiliac and you are allergic to sunflower seeds. You were born at 11 p.m, but before 11:32 p.m, eastern standard time.

I'minpain—You were delivered via a C-section, by a female doctor with very hairy armpits. You can claim as an ancestor at least two Yiddish milkmaids, and you can not digest prunes.

Callthedoctor—You were born during a great celestial event such as an eclipse, birth of a new star, or the passing of a Boeing 747 with blinking lights. Your paternal uncles are named Joe.

Lookattheblood—You are an unwed, brown haired, double-jointed individual who stands no shorter than 8'6". Garlic flowers were growing closer than 100 yards from your place of birth, and you look really good in pink.

Pleasekillme—Your first pet was born on major Jewish holiday and died on your neighbor's lawn. Your kidneys are different colors, and the diameter of your ankles is less than 1/6 that of your hat size.



Gonnabesick—You were conceived in an elevator during a full moon, no closer than 50 miles from a major body of water. You have the ability to recognize people by their scents and are at least five inches taller than your pet hamster.

That'llleaveamark—Born with Saturn rising, Jupiter descending, and Pluto having made a motion picture with Mickey Mouse in the past year. Someone in your family has a birthmark in the shape of a postage stamp, and you outweigh your oldest uncle.

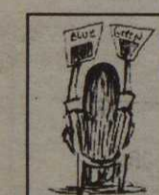


Ineedstitches—You were the seventh son of a seventh son of a really short man. You have no eyebrows, liver spots, or dental fillings. Your ears are taller than your middle finger is long.

Givembactine—You were born on the stroke of midnight in a really spooky castle, delivered by a doctor with six vowels in his surname. You are taller than your sister, shorter than your brother, and cannot use hairspray.

Havetocauterize—Darn near everybody else.

And now, your fortune . . .



Owchieoo—You will meet the love of your life this year. Said love will kill you and roast your carcass over a spit on the fourth date. Do not have your carpet cleaned.

Aghmyeye—Do not procrastinate this year. Put that off until next year.

Manthatsmarts—The police are on to you. Run.

I'minpain—Travel is recommended. However, take precautions. Wear a life jacket at all times. Even during sex. It may not save your life, but your mate will appreciate your creativity.



Callthedoctor—Tangerines will play a large part in your love life this year. What is even scarier: you will enjoy it.

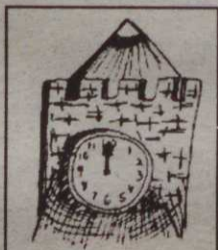
Lookattheblood—Take some time to gain the wisdom of your elders. Kevorkian will visit them soon.

Pleasekillme—Your love life is hopeless. Buy a cat.

Gonnabesick—Bleach your hair, invest in a cranberry farm, and sunbathe nude on your roof. You will enjoy yourself this year, but avoid photographs if you intend to run for political office.

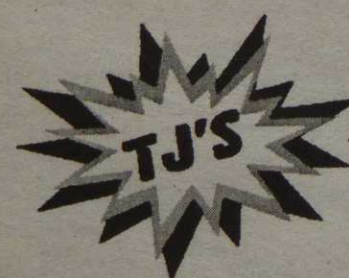
That'llleaveamark—You will be in a coma for most of the upcoming year. Buy a new mattress and a buckwheat pillow.

Ineedstitches—Replace the locks on your door and buy lots of really BIG guns. Until you have done this, do not break up with your current mate.



Givembactine—You poor, poor soul.

Havetocauterize—Do not look a gift horse in the mouth. Better yet, avoid people who routinely give horses as gifts. All things being equal, stay away from livestock altogether.



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INSIDE...

STAFF WRITERS

We need students with a knack for the printed word page... 4

COPY EDITORS

Students who are willing to lend copy editing skills are needed for the fall page... 7

ADVERTISING

Those interested in the advertising field welcome to join the Times staff page... 8

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Help with page set up and design needed for the new semester page... 10

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Amateur photojournalists and those with an eye for pictures wanted for the Fall term pages... 14 & 15

Salt

by Maureen A. Sherbondy

What The Wind Said As It Approached Me When I Was Unlocking My Car

by Stephen Frech

I know you. In the trees as a boy, you discovered the leaves in your friend's laughing, the silver wink of maple leaves that turn over and back. You both used to bounce on a bending branch, stand way out in high winds to know the tossing and the strain just before breaking.

But years later, your friend flew from the motorcycle, the throttle tore from his hand and you fell in love or thought you did. And finally, you had to fall twice with the same woman to really feel the breaking when it fell apart the second time.

Here you are in a hurry now with your arms so loaded you can't pull the keys from your pocket. If I wanted, I could knock you down, take something from you and you could do nothing.

He wakes to six rings of the telephone, dream of echoes punctured by screaming sirens and tumultuous thunder, notices the rotting apple waiting in the bowl, a cicada poking out its head. He grabs for a box of cereal instead, spills a cannister of salt all over the crumb coated floor.

At last, pressed and polished for the day, six of six he shoots out the door, grabs a snack of heated pretzel from an old vendor on the corner who whispers in the man's ear *shake the salt off this pretzel throw it over your shoulder and don't look back.*

As the man walks away he looks back, the old vendor has vanished into a crowd of pinstripe and charcoal suits.

With warning of his raucous call a crow swoops down, grabs the pretzel with his beak, carries it into the storm-threatening sky.

The man quickens his pace, runs from the salt babble, the pretzel-thief crow, and licks remnants of salt off his trembling hands.

Window cleaners above his head, they are washing away the cities filth from sixth floor glass, unnoticed, until something happens. Boards shift, pulleys snap men drop out of the sky like hail. The man on the street

is shoved from harm by a faceless hand, knocked to concrete encircled by broken bones yet able to stand. A black cat with green eyes watches as the shaken man sees blood on his white shirt, in the shape of a snaking six. The cat hisses.

On to the welcome distraction of Saks, clothing-racks of color, fabric, in order to detour from the days' events, to replace the blood-stained shirt.

The pointed plastic finger of a mannequin alerts him to his final error, he has walked beneath a ladder. A mirror breaks beside him.

He runs he runs he runs home. Digital clock near his bed reads 6:66, impossible he screams throws it out the window, it hits the crow, who releases the pretzel, now saltless, into the air.



CIBOLA

BY M. A. SCHAFFNER

NEAR THE CORNER OF LEE AND NORTH 31ST STANDS ONE OF THE SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD. CORONADO MEANDERED THE ENDLESS GRASSLANDS, EYEBROWS PRICKLED IN SEED AND FOREHEAD DUSTED WITH THE CHAFF WAFTED UP FROM HIS HORSE'S HOOVES; UNDER HIS MORION A GRIMACE OF FRUSTRATION, HIS GOAL FOUR HUNDRED YEARS, THREE THOUSAND MILES, AWAY.

NOW THIS. THE SWEATY AIR OF THE TORRID SUBURB HOLDS HIM WITH THE LOVING ARMS OF A FAT AUNT, AND THE ROSES OF THE SNAPSHOT GARDENS BEGUILE LIKE HER BIZARRE DISCOUNT SCENT: OH EXPLORERS! ADVENTURERS WHO NEVER IMAGINED THE POWER OF TELEVISION OR FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE! WHAT PRIESTS COULD EXORCIZE THOSE DEMONS?

AND YOU THERE, ENCUMBERED WITH ANOTHER FAITH, WAIT BY THE HEARTH FOR THIS WAYWARD SPANIARD AND ARRANGE YOUR FEATHERS WHILE HE COMES TO THE WELL, FIXED IN A GALAXY OF DARK EYES, HIS HANDS COMFORTING HIS TREMULOUS STEED. YOU KNOW. HE DOESN'T. THE ARID EARTH SURROUNDS HIM WITH TREASURE AND DANGER. YOUR LIPS, YOUR HEART

WERE THE SPARKLING PLUNDER THAT LURED HIM DOWN THE FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY, PAST SUPERMARKETS, DRUGSTORES, PREDATORY CAR LOTS, FUNKY MOTELS, AND GLASS OFFICES TO THIS: THE BRICK COLONIALS ANONYMOUS AS BLIND-EYED PUEBLOS, THE PEOPLE GARISH AS DANCERS BEFORE THEIR GODS.

WHAT CAN HE SAY AS HE KNOCKS ON THE DOOR AND HIS ARMOR FALLS AWAY, RUSTY AS AN OLD CHEVETTE? HERE LIES THE CITY OF CONQUISTADORS' DREAMS, LIKE FOOL'S GOLD GLINTING IN THE DESERT DAWN.

The New

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THE WORLD

sits atop a shelf in my bedroom, cradled in an arc etched with 180 notches that wraps around a hemisphere. Today, the arc splits New York, then runs down the spine of Chile. Soft fluorescence from a lamp throws a bright circle — the noon sun — on the southern tip of the "Dark Continent" at the spot where white men stage a foot race from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean.

Joggers circle Washington Square Park in the dark — air-filled Nikes break cadence for crack dealers and dog shit; shadows spread across guano dunes in the Atacama Desert, over the unknown graves of the disappeared. On Pennsylvania Avenue, huddled homeless begin their nightly ritual — the search for a warm spot on a sewer grate while dawn hovers over empty stomachs of waking peasants in Bangladesh, and I

ponder whether night created sleep or sleep created night. Whether any options were closed to an omnipotent Creator. Whether a Creator has to option to be omnipotent.

(by Michael Walls)



... Wolf Tree continued

behind her ears. "Well, it was hard, sure. Brad was only fifty-seven. It came with no warning of any kind. I will say he did me a favor, though. He managed to take his last breath in someone else's bed. That detail abbreviated my period of mourning."

"Man. That's a lot to handle. How did you learn?"
"She called me. What else could she do? Robin Corson. We stayed in touch for a couple of years. She handled it okay, after she caught on I wasn't going to harm her. Losing Brad was probably harder for Robin than for me. She loved him in that unrealistic way you do when you're not married. Not that I didn't love him, too. Plus she felt somehow responsible for his death. God knows what they were doing that led up to it. Brad could generate a lot of enthusiasm in the sack." Annette reached into the cupboard for coffee, then seemed to let her thoughts travel through the window and down the Valley. "I kind of like Robin Corson."

"I used to be pretty conventional," Annette shook herself back into focus. "Scrambled okay? They're fertilized by that rooster you heard this morning." She fished a wire basket of brown eggs from her fridge. "Yeah, I was a real Betty Crocker mom. Cookies and milk for Storm when he came home from school and all that. I tried to do what the women's magazines dictated. Eye shadow. Christmas cards with little red sparkles glued onto Rudolph's nose. Then one day I said, 'screw it'. It just seemed like an awful lot of trouble, keeping track of all these silly rules that don't really relate to who we are and why we're here."

Annette cut slabs of coarse, brown bread. She divided sections of orange and pieces of banana between two hand painted plates. For a brief time, she was long arms and legs and big hair all over that sun-spangled kitchen, cooking with one hand, drinking coffee with the other. If she had a third hand, she'd have been wiping it clean on the seat of her slender jeans. In fact, for a time, he couldn't say she didn't have a third hand, she moved so fast.

The scene at Annette's house felt fine for then. He was a guy who thrived on making his way on his own and by not knowing what was ahead. Leon felt safe. He trusted that Annette was not the sort to clutch at him or ask him to be any way that he wasn't.

He stayed with Annette through the spring and early summer. They cleared out the second bedroom to get his 6'2" frame off the six foot couch. They freshened up the paint on the bedroom walls and added a layer of creamy enamel to the woodwork. Leon fixed the sash weights so the window would stay open.

Around the solstice when the days were long, Leon heard Annette call out from a dream. He went to her, his bare feet slapping pine planks and crossing hooked rugs in the dark of night. He crept onto her sheets and held her against his skin until they woke to a peach-colored dawn. It was the first they had touched for the sake of pure human connection.

Annette didn't recall the dream, nor did she flinch to see Leon in her bed. When they rose from breakfast that morning she said, "Leon, if you're going to stay here, we might as well do sex, don't you think?" It was as if she were itemizing a shopping list or planning a new chicken coop.

"Oh. Well, sure. As long as it's on sort of a no-strings basis." He thought for a minute. "Yeah, good idea — let's see how it works out." Leon dried his hands on a dish towel then looked directly at Annette. "In fact, now that you mention it, the suspense is killing me. No point in waiting." Then more slowly, "How about giving it a try right now?" She stepped closer. He hesitated. Then in one smooth motion he took her face in both hands and tentatively ran one thumb lightly over her lower lip. A shiver traveled up his arms.

Annette led him into her room and opened the curtains. She undid her shorts with one hand and shed her shirt. She slipped between the cool covers and reached out toward him. "I sure hope this works," she said, and Leon joined her. They held each other tight for a moment, not daring to breathe, before their two bodies became a tumble of warm flesh.



Leon is aiming his truck toward Annette's place. He feels an old friend rising in his lap as he thinks back to that June morning six weeks ago when he and Annette were first intimate. It's a scene

they've repeated many times since.

Leon follows the road he's come to know this summer. He's felt pretty relaxed in Diamond Springs. He's done some hiking. Annette's taken him to dip naked into glacier-fed pools edged by high country heather. He's searched the infinity of sky after an afternoon snooze on warm granite. Even helping Annette fence the deer out of her garden seemed uncommonly satisfying. He remembers how they got the giggles after he found a tick embedded under his arm and Annette teased it out, and he was brave.

Leon looks up the Valley through his bug-plastered windshield. He half expects to see the high clouds spell out 'Home Sweet Home' in soft puffs and is glad when he realizes they don't.

Leon's not sure where he'll land next, but it feels like time for moving his bunk. He'll stay in the Springs if he can, or down at the junction if someone has a place he can rent, but he's been at Annette's too long. Scotty wants him to keep on working at the Tree. There'll be more year-round people this winter — especially if the new ski camp gets going. He's grateful to Annette for not wanting to entangle him. It wouldn't have worked, anyway. In fact, her independence is one of her best features. It just seems safest to clear out. Why ask for trouble, Leon thinks. He's pretty sure Annette will take it in stride. She said she didn't want to get attached. Probably, she wants her house back to herself anyway.

Annette's garage is up by the county road. She's there repainting a corner where a wandering tourist bumped his fender against the building on a dark night. Leon had helped Annette replace some broken boards. Now, she's nailed up red, plastic reflectors to prevent a recurrence. One or two shiny discs would do the job, but Annette bought a whole bagful and placed them in a pattern around the corner. She stands back to admire the whole repair as he pulls his truck into the driveway next to her little rig.

"I hope it doesn't look silly. It's supposed to be functional art. What do you think?" She greets Leon with a healthy smile. "Here, help me pick up the paint stuff, and I'll make us some dinner. There was a special on short ribs. I have them marinating."

"Sounds great," Leon says. "But Annette, I want to be up front. This will probably be my last night here." They walk towards the house.

"Really," she replies. Last night, huh? She looks him up and down. "Getting itchy feet?" Then adds, "You didn't quit the Tree, did you?"

"No. No. I'm staying on down there." Leon answers. "I've got to keep body and soul together, somehow." Then he adds, "I'll get a place in town. Or at the junction." Leon looks toward the horizon. "Maybe even sign up for a box at the Post Office."

"Careful, cowboy. That's a mighty serious commitment." Annette steps toward the porch and forces a laugh. She reaches her free hand out to open the screen door. Leon notices that she pulls it rather angrily. It doesn't surprise him to see the top hinge give way. When the door comes loose it throws Annette off-balance, and in not so slow motion she spirals over. Gravity. Right under their noses when they least expect it. Paint brushes and thinner decorate her things. "Damn," she says, "I knew that hinge was shot."

Leon gets Annette and the porch mopped up and checks her over for damage. He folds up what's left of the door.

She rubs a welt on her hip and agrees to let him put the dinner in the oven while she washes mineral spirits down the shower drain.

She comes out of the bathroom in a long, loose shift, saying, "Gary and Diane called this afternoon." She stabs the cork in a bottle of wine. "They want to come up this weekend. I said I'd fix a portable breakfast. We can hike up to Columbine Pass Sunday morning. You'd have time to do that with us and still get to work. Why don't you stay through their visit?"

It sounds like a straight-forward invitation. Truth is, he likes Annette's friends. The weekend she's just described sounds great. He's heard that the morning light coming through Columbine Pass is spectacular — worth getting up early for. "Well, sure," Leon agrees. "That sounds like fun. I'll clear out next week sometime."

Sunday night, after the weekend guests have gone, Leon remembers his intention to build a new screen door. He likes the old one that broke. An aluminum replacement wouldn't be good enough

for Annette or for her tidy house. Most of Leon's tools are stored in a friend's garage outside Spokane, about a three hour drive away.

"Hey, I've been thinking," he starts out.
"Don't hurt yourself," Annette interrupts.
"Ha. Ha," Leon says. "No. I'm thinking I might drive over to Pete's this Thursday when I'm off at the Tree. I could pick up the gear I stashed there and maybe have what I need to fix your door."

"Great. You don't need my permission. Sounds fine." Annette focuses back on the book in her lap.

"What I mean is, I won't be clearing out yet. I mean — until I get your door done, that is. And I might want to leave my stuff here for a little while. Would that be okay?" Leon rubs a twitch near his eye.

"Leon." Annette looks at him. "You're welcome to go; you're welcome to stay. You're good company; you're a free agent. Just don't ask me to look after you, okay? I think it's nice that you want to fix the screen door. It's great that you've decided to stay in Tweed Valley. From what I gather, people around here really like you. I don't know what you're always running from, anyway."

"You're wrong on that one," Leon says. "I've never run from a god-damned thing. I just like to stay light on my feet, that's all."

Leon's self-imposed one-week extension at Annette's house becomes three. Labor Day clears out the summer folk. Mornings turn crisp with mist hanging over the Tweed River. Orchardists are watching their apples color up.

One golden morning, Leon serves Annette a cheese and tomato omelet he's made from the brown eggs he's come to treasure. "Deiter Engelhoff was in the Tree last night," he says. Annette puts a piece of buttered toast on Leon's plate. "He got his permit from the Forest Service, so it looks as if his ski camp is a go for this year."

"Great," says Annette. "Are you going to be part of it?"

"Well, he wants me to help him put up the huts — you know, they have to be designed to come down in the summer. That's specified in the permit. We'd spread out the gear along the Ridge Road while we can still get in before snow. Stoves and cooking stuff and I don't know what all. Englehoff kind of wants me to be his back up. Go along with him when he takes people out and keep them on their skis. I talked to Scotty. He thinks it would work in with his winter schedule to have me cut back on hours at the Tree."

"Are you going to do it?"
"Well, yeah. I think I will."
"Do you want to stay on here?"

Leon gets up from the table. He walks outside, then comes back in as quickly as he left. "I could teach you to telemark ski — if you get yourself some back country boards, that is."

"Do you want to stay on here, Leon?" Annette looks at him.

"Did you know Scotty plans to remodel the Wolf Tree? He's got blueprints and everything. And get this. They cut down the tree the place was named for. Made the parking lot bigger. Did it yesterday. Had to take it down in sections so it wouldn't bounce off the roof. Everyone was saying he should get the tree milled for paneling — you know, inside. But I don't know if he can get many boards out of it. Of course, it's nothing but knots what with all those low branches, and it looked pretty puny in the center. Well, I guess that's Scotty's problem."

"Leon."
"Well, what exactly are you saying, Annette?"
"I'm saying do you want to use my mail box?"

"Oh. Yes. I mean no. I mean I understand, now — not yes to the question, but as in, yes, I see." Leon's hands comb through his hair. "So. Stay on. Mail box. Got it. Well, the thing of it is, Annette, if I stay on much longer," he paces, "I'm afraid I will come to love you." He rakes his hair again.

Leon looks steadily at Annette, but his voice quivers. "And the thing is, I don't know how to do that, really."

"Let's hang your shirts in my closet, cowboy. I don't know how either. But I'm willing to try." She reaches out to him and takes both his hands. "And while we're at it, we'll put in some sort of subscription for you with this address." She pulls him toward the bedroom. "Didja hear the one about the woman with the glass eye? She met a drifter, and he asked her to keep an eye out for him. Get it? Keep an eye out for him?"

-Flipside

...911 continued

sends them where they are scheduled to go.

Once on the floor, administrative offices are open and accessible to the public. The entire fourth floor boasts renovations, from the sparkling white tile on the foyer floor, to the mauve flecked carpet inside the administrative area, to the freshly painted, eye-opening white walls, to the modern, yet practical office furniture.

Locked doors bar entrance to the dispatching room and a keypad on the wall outside waits to be punched with a code to permit access. Aside from the need to protect the valuable equipment hard at work inside, Napolillo said this area deals with confidential information that cannot be open to the public. "We have access to state police records too, and they, of course, expect security for those."

The consoles in the dispatching room each have three screens. A multi-colored mapping screen, used to pinpoint the location of a caller, is the most intriguing and probably the most high-tech of the center's equipment. Dispatchers have the capability to zoom in on a caller's location once they ascertain the information they pull up is correct. Dispatchers can also use this information to help guide responding units to the caller's location. A computer aided dispatching (CAD) screen is where phone number and address information appears. This information is received from Bell-Atlantic's customer data-base, and incident information is logged here. The other screen controls and monitors radio communications of responding emergency units in the county.

For someone not accustomed to listening to scanners, the information transmitted over the airwaves is difficult to follow.

The only female in this crew, 43-year-old Anita Huey of Brownsville, mans the police console which constantly crackles with law enforcement voices. Huey seems like the sociable next door neighbor who is a friend to everyone, although she shares highly confidential information with many police officers. In addition to dispatching police assistance, she runs name and address searches for police who call her for help when looking for certain individuals. "One of the police officers gave me a name to run. I ran it and it came back no record found but something about it just didn't sound right. So I ran it a couple of different ways." She found the individual and contacted police who later apprehended the person who turned out to be a criminal from New York. A big smile creasing her face, she said, "It's satisfying to know that that criminal didn't get away with something."

Huey was a paramedic for 15 years. After a car accident left her with a ruptured spleen, her doctor advised her to give up her ambulance runs. She said she wanted to take this job because she missed being out on the road as a paramedic. "This is about as close as I'm going to get to it."

With her background, it is no wonder Huey appears accustomed to the stress of the fast-paced business. Swinging her long brown hair over her shoulder, she says talking things over in general with her husband helps. "He is a paramedic too, so he knows what I'm talking about."

Tapping her fingers, eagerly waiting for the next call, Huey mentions her family as well. She says her four kids grew up readily accepting their parents' work in this type of environment. "When I used to dispatch for the ambulance, the kids would like to listen to Mom

on the scanner. But when I get home now, I turn the scanner off."

Nodding and tilting her head to one side in certainty, Huey credits triage skills learned as a paramedic in helping her the most on the job today. "You learn to get the worst calls first. You don't dispatch an ambulance for a cut finger before a call about a cardiac arrest." She also prides herself on her ability to stay calm. "At the time of the incident, like when I was on an ambulance call and we would have a cardiac arrest, during the call I'd be fine. I might lose it at the hospital later, but during the call, I'd be fine. And I think it's a learned response, because I can be very emotional."

Airwaves inside the control room constantly clatter with voices. "Fayette County Station 20 Hopwood, reported vehicle accident with injuries, Route 40 East near Lick Hollow Campgrounds." "Any injuries?"

"You see when we didn't have anything going on, but then we may have five incidents going on at one time, or more, and ah, sometimes it gets kinda crazy."

"Let me give you the non-emergency number for administrative staff - hold on."

"What do we have, Station 39?"

"Wait one second, we'll give you a cancellation... no cancellation?"

"Let me transfer you over to Anita, she's on police - hold on."

"We're all nosy here too. We listen in on each others calls because if we can get a jump on a call maybe we can get an address or phone number that we can type in while somebody else..."

"Fayette County Station 43 South Union, reported automatic fire alarm at Fayette Regional Cancer Center, Cherry Tree Lane."

"Station 43 South Union acknowledges the call." "That's received Station 43, Operations 31 C."

"Is that South Union or North Union Township?"

"Hello, this is Fayette County 911. We just received a hang up call from your residence. Is everything OK?"

While Huey was talking about her triage skills, she was interrupted to answer a hang-up call which was one of a number she received during that shift. Because the center fields a high number of these calls, a standard procedure is in place to deal with them. "You call back all hang-up calls. If for some reason somebody got on the phone and then couldn't say anything, we need to know," Huey explained. "For instance, during a domestic where the wife calls and the husband rips the phone out of her hands and hangs up. We call back all hang-up calls to make sure there's no problem. If we don't get a response when we do call back, we send police out to check it out."

Konopa chimes in during a free minute, "It's really frustrating to get hang-up calls from pay phones, because there's not a whole lot we can do about it." Napolillo said when police are contacted to check out these calls, they usually are placed low on the priority

list. "It's frustrating to them too, because more often than not, there is no reason for them to go," he said.

Bill Sherwood, this crew's supervisor, seems out of place because of his quiet manner compared to the other dispatchers, although he somehow balances out the quartet. With his prowling presence, the 34-year-old Bullsken Township resident was the only dispatcher prone to walking around... waiting. The other dispatchers are basically tethered to their consoles. If they do leave, it is only for a very short period of time. Sherwood's function is to backup the dispatchers and to make sure everything runs smoothly during their shift.

The former emergency medical technician had the mind-boggling experience of talking a woman through childbirth after he started at the center. "The baby was a preemie," Sherwood says calmly, taking the whole experience in stride. "I basically just let nature take its course." And another reference to family, "I have three boys. I can take just about anything after them."

So how have these dispatchers managed to successfully handle more than 60,000 incidents for fire, medical trauma, police and miscellaneous calls in the first full year of operations? Police calls, including Pennsylvania State Police transfers, made up the bulk of these calls, at 28,133. EMS calls totaled 8,338. Fire related calls reached 8,192 while miscellaneous totaled 9,868. Hang up calls accounted for 5,929. Napolillo estimated the average number of incidents each day Sunday through Thursday at 159, while Friday and Saturday each averaged 185 calls. Of the EMS calls, some form of medical pre-arrival instructions were given in 3,047 incidents. Of the total calls listed, 2,158 were vehicle accidents, with 1,479 reporting injuries.

Maybe it's too soon to tell. Napolillo said the center does not have a routine stress management program available for the dispatchers. However, he did confirm that if any of them run into a situation where they feel the need to defuse and talk something out with someone, a critical incident stress debriefing program is available with the county's mental health department.

"Sometimes it is very busy and then it slows down, and that gives the dispatchers a chance to regroup," Napolillo said. "They can take the good with the bad."

The dispatchers are obviously very special people.

-Flipside

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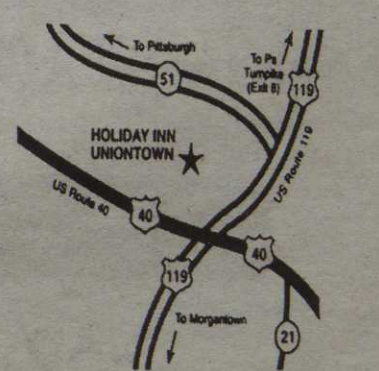
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... Normalville continued

In most clearings, tiny rusted trailers nestled under a sagging clothesline. The clothes were hung still caked with mud or greasy from oil. I wondered out loud if "these people" (as we referred to them) hung out their dirty clothes and waited for it to rain and let God's rinse cycle clean for them. George snickered when Ben pointed out a large, dirty pair of pink women's underwear. I was more amused to see a pair of oily construction boots hanging on one clothes line.

Bill, who grew tired of looking at everyone's dirty laundry on display, noticed that the only vehicles in drive-ways were the cabs of rigs. Once I realized that with only a few exceptions he was right, I noticed that most of the rigs sported highly tasteful silhouettes of naked women on the front of their bug-catchers.

As I grew accustomed to the views of life in the mountains, we hit the part in the road where the asphalt stopped and rough gravel traced the sharp bend in the road. On the other side of the bend sat a family out in front of a shack that looked like someone had nailed some plywood together, stuck a stove in the middle of it and called it home. The family, numbering six or seven, had lined their chairs (which looked like the kitchen chairs my family had when I was a baby) along the roadside. The majority of them were male and two kids played in the gravel at the family's feet. Several adults and a teenager were smoking pipes and one man was spitting tobacco into the dirt. The old woman, most likely the mother,

grabbed my attention. She sat and intently puffed away on a corncob pipe. Her salt-and-pepper hair, thin and



matted, was loosely bobby-pinned to her scalp. She looked more weather-worn than the others, and she stared at the car with cold coal eyes as we passed.

"The important thing to do is not to look at anyone in the eyes when you pass them," Bill said under his breath, reaching forward to turn down

the car stereo. "And for God's sake, Noele, stop staring."

I shook my head quickly, realizing Bill was trying to tell me I was behaving rudely. I fixed my gaze straight ahead although I was dying to see more.

"...you really have to be careful out here," Bill continued lecturing. "There are mountain men out here. I mean real mountain men who come down out of the hills. We should be alright, but Noele isn't to go anywhere alone, got it?"

"Yeah, no running off to pick daisies," Ben teased me.

"Seriously, though, no one takes a leak without a gun and Noele has to have one of us with her at all times," Bill continued.

I was beginning to worry about this whole trip and was about to voice my concerns when Bill said, "Turn down left here down that road."

"Turn left where?" Ben asked.

"Here!" Bill insisted.

and a sawed-off 12 gauge, the latter being entrusted to me. I stared at the heavy piece of artillery.

"You'll learn to shoot that later," Bill smiled.

With about 500 pounds (including people weight) out of the car, it intermittently bottomed out and bounced along the rough trail down the mountain.

At the bottom, George, Bill, and I all climbed in again. We drove past small clearings where other campers had parked Suburbans and Broncos beside their tents. Everyone who was out stared at us.

"What are they looking out?" I whispered to Ben.

"They're probably wondering how we got down here and how we plan on getting out again," he replied.

About a half a mile down the straight away, we found an empty clearing overlooking the river, about a 200-foot drop below. A 25-foot drop off threaded by a narrow footpath separated where we parked the car from our leveled campsite. Enough foliage grew so that we couldn't see the car. Ben voiced his concerns over something happening to the car while it was out of sight.

Bill smiled and waved away Bill's concerns. He eagerly threw his gear in a heap and started loading and cleaning his guns. They took turns firing the different weapons into the water below.

"Here, Noele. Start with a .22," George said and handed the rifle to me. We used leaves and small pieces of bark floating down the river for target prac-

tice. When I could successfully hit the targets, Bill handed me a .357 handgun, warning me it had a little kick to it. The powerful Boom! of the .357 replaced the light pop-pop of the .22. This wasn't the first time I shot a .357 though. My mom owned one for



protection, so I was accustomed to its feel and sound. After I fired a couple rounds, Bill looked at me and smirked.

"Alright, hotshot. Try the 12 gauge, but brace yourself against a tree," he said. I shot the gun a few times, getting the feel for the recoil it delivered to my shoulder and watching the four-foot diamond-shaped pattern the shrapnel slashed in to the water below. Then I spent the rest of my rounds in rapid pump-and-fire progression. With my shells spent, I looked at the others and saw them staring at me.

"You sick little bitch," Ben laughed. "No one fires like that unless they really enjoy their weapon." I smiled and returned the gun to Bill, glad to have won their respect. But I was tired of my ears ringing and the gun powder smell was making me sick, so I suggested cracking open the beer in the cooler and partying for the evening.

It didn't take much convincing and soon we were drinking heavily. As night overtook our camp, we pitched two bright orange pup tents. Drizzle began

to fall, so the four of us crowded into Bill and George's tent to smoke a few joints before Ben and I retired to our own tent. Bill loaded the .22 and George held up the 12 gauge. They looked gleefully at one another and announced to Ben and me, "Don't worry ladies, we'll protect you from all the hoodlums lurking out about tonight." I giggled and watched Ben throw a few lazy punches at Bill for insulting his manhood. I fell into my sleeping bag exhausted from the long day, and the effects of the alcohol and drugs. The rain fell harder and lulled me to sleep.

A little before dawn, I was startled awake by the rapid succession of gunfire coming from Bill's tent. Ben bolted awake, grabbed the .357 by his side, and motioned to me to keep quiet.

"Mother fucker, get the the hell out of here you God-damned bastard! I'll fuckin' kill you, you fuckin' son-of-a bitch..." Bill screamed on and on.

I hid in my sleeping bag, shaking uncontrollably. I heard Ben unzip the door to the tent and step outside.

"Dude! What's up?!" he demanded. I didn't understand what was said, but after about five minutes of discussion, I heard the words "Get Noele."

I popped out of the tent, begging to know what was wrong.

"Get your stuff together, we're leaving now," Ben said.

"Can someone take me into the bushes to pee first?" I asked.

"No!" All three barked. "Just hold it for awhile," Ben said tossing gear into a bag. Too scared to argue, I commenced packing because George looked petrified and even Bill looked a little shaken.

With the car packed in less than fifteen minutes, Bill, George, and I carried as much gear as possible and followed the car through the deep mud. We questioned whether or not the old Honda was capable of maneuvering the large mud mountain to get out of the pit we were in. We passed the other camps where mostly everyone else was still sleeping. Those awake were warming themselves over kindled fires and sipping coffee. Hadn't they heard all the commotion minutes before?

When we neared the base of the incline, Ben gunned the engine, kicking up mud behind him and splattering the three of us. He swerved back and forth in the

slippery mud, fighting to regain control. He slowly made progress up the mucky path to freedom.

Bill reloaded his .357 and handed George the 12 gauge. They seemed to search the foliage on both sides of the car as Ben continued up the hill. Ben's momentum dwindled the farther the car climbed. The Honda rocked to almost a complete stop. George and Bill dropped their bags and charged at the hatchback to make the car have just a little more muscle.

The downpour resumed just as the Honda slowly rounded the peak of the hill and emerged onto the gravel road again. Bill, George, and I let out a cry of victory as we dove into the car. Ten minutes more and we never would have made it.

"Hit it!" Bill cried and Ben punched the gas. The car sped away kicking up loose gravel.

As we passed houses with now clean laundry on the lines, soaked from the rain, I begged again to know what had happened to send everyone into a fury and caused us to leave so early in the morning.

Bill and George looked at each other, then looked at my face twisted around in the front seat to stare at them.

Finally Bill said, "Well, since we're already leaving and we're out of that hole, I guess it's cool to tell you."

He took a breath, watching the windshield wipers swishing the rain away before continuing. "I woke up to a loud bang this morning, so I grabbed the .22 and poked my head out of the tent."

"At first I couldn't see much because it was still dark," Bill said. "I heard something move close by. It was a mountain man. By this time he had got the kerosene and most of our food. I'm just glad that I scared him off before he got any farther. I'd hate to think what could have happened if he had come to your tent first."

As the reality of what could have happened set in, a shiver ran up the center of my back. Ben put his arm around me and said, "Don't worry Nick, I would of protected you."

Nonetheless, I decided to wait until I got home to use the bathroom.

"Hey," Bill said to lighten the mood. "my friend's parents are away for the weekend."

We knew that we had some great stories to tell at the party.

-Flipside



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... Wave continued at Kulik.

Kulik braced himself. Undoubtedly, the superintendent had something on him, something serious, otherwise he never would have been summoned here to his office. He had to try and find a way to guard himself, and fast. But how could he do this when he didn't know from which end he would be attacked? He tried to make sense of what was happening, but couldn't even explain it to himself. He was about to be accused of some unknown horror, but what this horror was he did not yet know.

Yeliseyenko rose from his seat, and with his hands behind his back, paced from his desk to the door. His head was slightly bent and he appeared deep in thought, as if trying to decide which question to pose first. Finally he turned to Kulik, and looking at him from under his brows, said, "I understand you are the headmaster of School Number 7?"

"Yes, that's correct." Kulik's heart felt like exploding.

"Please, have a seat." Yeliseyenko glanced down at his notes, then looked up again. "Well, hm... this is all rather interesting. Yes, yes. And now the question remains, what are we to do with you?" He bore his eyes into Kulik, who felt as if he were being hit by a series of grenades. "The Pinsk region has been affixed to the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic in which Byelorussian and only Byelorussian is to be taught. Why are you promoting Ukrainian in your school? Are you aware of the complications you are creating for yourself? It's becoming evident to me you are a Ukrainian nationalist, perhaps a saboteur of some sort? This matter may easily lead to some very severe consequences."

Kulik sat unmoving. So that was it. They already had a file on him! Striving to keep up appearances, he drew a deep breath and held it several seconds. He had to play their game, one small slip and it would all be over. He had to say something and fast, something to offset his accuser. But when he finally opened his mouth to speak, he was shocked by what came out — the words came as if from somewhere else. "I understand why I am here," he mumbled. "I know what you want of me." And suddenly he turned dead white. What a careless thing for him to have said! He just implicated himself, admitted his own guilt.

Yeliseyenko grinned triumphantly, shaking his head up and down, as if already having convicted him. "So, you know what we want of you. In other words, you agree your behavior has been questionable. Everything is clear, yes, as though it were written on the back of my hand. You've decided to give instruction in your school in Ukrainian, that we are well aware of. But who authorized you to make this decision? We are part of the Byelorussian republic and it is Byelorussian, along with Russian, of course, that will be taught in the schools. Moscow has made its decision and its decision cannot, under any circumstance, be contradicted."

Thrusting himself forward, Yeliseyenko looked more like a beast about to pounce on his prey than a man of office. "And why are you twitching your lips? Now you're shrugging your shoulders. Are you confused about something? Surely someone as clever as yourself could not have forgotten about the meet-

ing last spring when the National People's Deputy Committee sectioned off the republics?"

When Kulik did not respond immediately, Yeliseyenko repeated more harshly than before, "Have you forgotten?"

"No, I have not." Trying to collect himself as best he could, staring directly at Yeliseyenko, Kulik raced to formulate a suitable reply. "I am not only proud of our Soviet regime," he stammered, "but also to be a member of the greatest nation on earth."

Then quite unexpectedly and to his own horror, he found himself going off on a different tangent, one that he promised himself at all costs to avoid: he became bold, even defiant, in short, a danger to himself. "I am confident," he felt the flow of words rush out of his mouth, "when the regime becomes better acquainted with the Pinsk region, it will undoubtedly reconsider its stand and attach the area to Ukraine where it belongs."

Yeliseyenko turned a deep crimson and there was a dark, cold look in his eyes. He was furious. How dare Kulik, a mere civil servant, question the decision of the all-powerful regime. He was on the verge of giving him a piece of his mind, when suddenly he stopped short. Gasping for air and with a weakness developing in his knees, he started to experience pangs of inadequacy. Sensing he could be outsmarted in no time, made into a fool, frantically and in a bit of a sweat, he searched for a way to deal with the adversary before him. The onus was on him not to let the Party down, even if for an instant. He was a distinguished Soviet representative now and had responsibilities to uphold, he had to be strong and in control at all times.

The Party, after all, had entrusted him to this new and very significant position, and it was his duty to watch out for and report any signs of treason. Jotting something down on a piece of paper, as if making notes, from time to time he glanced from the corner of his eye to see if on Kulik's face he could detect some sort of discomfort or even panic. But when his expression remained blank, Yeliseyenko wisely abandoned his strategy of attack. Almost without thinking, as if it a trance, he fell into a recitation of stan-

dard Soviet phrases. Here he was able to master himself. "We live in the most democratic country in the world," he shouted at the top of his voice. "The Soviet government is supreme. It ensures freedom and democracy to all the people of its republics. The Party is committed to preserving all national languages and promises to give special attention to schools, the sciences, and fine arts. All republics now stand firmly united under the sound protection of their older Russian bloodbrothers."

As Yeliseyenko completed the latter part of his speech, Kulik, upon hearing him lapse into Ukrainian, gasped in astonishment. His language was clear and fluent, and from his intonations it was evident he was from somewhere around the Kiev area. Yeliseyenko bit his lower lip. He was red with rage and embarrassment, his secret had been exposed. Up until this point, he had been confident his performance was nothing short of perfect; he even believed he had done well in tricking Kulik into believing he was a true Muscovite. But now he was exposed, stripped of all his dignity. And to make matters worse, he had betrayed his beloved Party. By a stupid slip of the tongue, he had not only revealed a crack in the Soviet system, but had shown it to be not as sound as it appeared on the surface. He felt a traitor.

This disclosure made Kulik only more anxious about his immediate future. He didn't believe a fellow-countryman, out to prove himself to the Kremlin, would for one minute demonstrate compassion toward one of his own; quite the contrary, he would be more inclined to nail him to the ground. Kulik thought of it with despair and convinced himself of his own end. His lips became parched and a deathly pallor came to his face. He felt as though he were being prodded by a pistol out into a courtyard somewhere, where a single and final bullet awaited him. Drawing a deep breath and straining every faculty, he battled to save himself from disaster. Pretending not to have noticed Yeliseyenko's blunder, he shouted with a passion that even amazed himself, "Comrade Yeliseyenko, I am an honest and faithful citizen of our new and great Soviet Empire. I am proud to be a member of the most powerful mass movement in his-

tory, and I will fight alongside my bloodbrothers to the very end."

"Well, well," Yeliseyenko threw up his arms, delighted by the turnaround. "It's good to hear you express such encouraging views. I commend you for them." Then lowering his brows as if in warning, "Only I don't commend you for your teaching habits. When you return to your school you are no longer to teach in Ukrainian. Is that understood? You are not to use Ukrainian under any circumstance. I am well aware you have no knowledge of the Byelorussian language, but not to worry, this does not pose a problem. We are a nation of Soviet peoples and all Soviet peoples must first and foremost speak Russian. In short, you will be teaching the children in your school Russian, which, I understand, you speak fluently."

Kulik sank back in his seat, and in a dull state, nodded. So that was their plan. Languages of the republics were to be encouraged, but only on a superficial level; underneath this guise came Bolshevism and a gradual Russification. Russian was to be extended in all spheres of social life. Talk of preserving ethnicity was just a sham and nothing more. Now Kulik for the first time fully understood the goals and calculations of the new system.

Yeliseyenko went on, "Allow me to speak candidly, Comrade Ivan. I know you are a historian and with a degree from the University in Vilno—a fact, I might add, which is not to your credit. To put it simply, you have an education from a bourgeois institution where you were taught not only by nonsocialistic professors but by pretentious, self-serving priests. Your education was attained in a hostile and unproductive environment. Take my advice and study the five volumes on Soviet history. Master Marxist methodology and learn how to approach the phenomenon of scientific socialism; come to understand thoroughly the history of struggles between the ruling and exploited classes. Give added attention to the Communist Manifesto and learn how the capitalist classes of all nations will be overthrown and eliminated by a worldwide working-class revolution." When a flash of sympathy suddenly appeared on Yeliseyenko's face, Kulik became both

startled and perplexed. "Should you succeed in re-educating yourself," he continued, "I may, in the near future, be able to recommend you for promotion to some higher institution like a gymnasium here in Pinsk or a university in some other leading city. Do you understand what I'm getting at? Now, I suggest you knock on that door." He pointed to the left of his desk, to a narrow wooden door that appeared to lead to some closet or storage room. Had it not been for a faint streak of light seeping in through the base, Kulik wouldn't even have noticed it. "My secretary will prepare the specified books for you. Good day to you, Comrade."

Already behind the door, Kulik felt a tremendous weight lifted from his shoulders. For today, at least, he might consider himself out of jeopardy. Although nothing concrete had been compiled against him, still, he felt he had compromised himself seriously, and it was just a matter of time before he would be nabbed again.

Returning to the theater and resuming his seat beneath the gallery, Kulik stared at the stage without hearing or seeing anyone. He was so muddled and disoriented by everything, he really didn't know whether to panic or to collect himself and try to find some logical explanation. Something dark and frightful was about to occur and there appeared no way out. He could not help shuddering. He attempted to clear his mind, to think of nothing; perhaps with a fresh start he could begin to make some sort of sense of what was happening. But he found this impossible — he was a conscious human being aware of himself and of his own surroundings, and to blot out his consciousness was like having his flesh turn to stone. He continued to rack his brain, asking himself question after question: Why had he been summoned to appear before Yeliseyenko? Had he displayed disloyal tendencies somewhere along the way? Had he in some way neglected to stay true to his position? Was this a test of his endurance? A battle of nerves? A joke of some sort? And what was this talk about familiarizing himself with Marxist ideology? Was he being perceived as an advancing adversary, an enemy to com-

munist? Everything seemed so incomprehensible, so ludicrous. He wiped the sweat from his brow and released another shudder.

Before long he was engulfed by a new stream of thoughts, and rather than falling into a deeper state of despair, instead he became energized and revitalized. A sense of optimism surged through his being. Wasn't he still a free man, free to go whichever way he chose? And suddenly he valued this freedom more than ever before. His future even looked hopeful. Hadn't he just proved himself innocent before Yeliseyenko? Wasn't that why he had been released? When he had first been summoned, he was almost certain of his end, but things turned out differently: a stone was hurled at him and he was struck by a pebble. He began to think maybe the new regime was not as brutal as he believed it to be. Perhaps he had overreacted, perhaps he had not taken a true view of the situation.

But when again he started going over his meeting with Yeliseyenko, his reservations resurfaced and it became clear to him he had indeed just gone through an ordeal. He began to shake all over. Question after question piled up inside of him, and he was unable to make sense of anything that had just happened. He was on the verge of being convicted for some form of anti-Soviet activity, but what this activity was he could not say. When the time of his arrest would come, with no trial and no judge, unknown to family and friends, he would be cast into some deep, dark hole, and left to die. And suddenly he felt trapped by the utter absurdity of the accusations building up against him. He was falling deeper and deeper into a psychological abyss.

Grabbing hold of himself, he strove to put things into some kind of perspective, but the more he tried, the more he ceased thinking like a normal person. There was no logic anywhere and the real world as it was known, no longer existed. Everything was passing him by like a dream. Banging his fist against the side of his leg, and with his head exploding, he was on the verge of shouting for all in the theater to hear: "Damn these thoughts! Damn them all!"

Flipside

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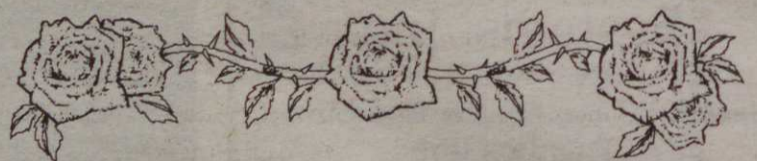
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Aunt Colony

by John Birkbeck

My nine aunts, all identical—
Line up before me in their ninefold beauty
And overpowering & sublime formidancy
While I squat on my little potty chair—
An audience made up of me
Viewing a stage-full of nintuplets
Every breath, every posture, every eighteen-eye-blink
In unison; they are a chorus line
Ranked across stage centre,
The 9th barrier between myself and the footlights.
They inspect, they critique, they lecture,
They third-person me—

Does he eat his oatmeal—to the last glob?
Does he lick the platter clean?
How are his Latin lessons coming along?
—the little shit!

Look at his little peenee! Look at his little marble sac!
He couldn't hump an ant let alone an aunt!
Look at him, he's snivveling, as if that'll get him off!
He's a failure, a wimp, a disgrace!
We've made him cry! See, the tears are running now!
Does he have a problem with this?

They are a fury ninefold howling,
A single chorale from nine hells,
A nine-harpy team with a single basketball,
Terror-dribbling the length of a single court
And myself a single Toyota
In a nine-way collision in mid-intersection.

Nine anti-cheerleaders and one anti-hero,
Nine rules of grammar and one slang word,
Nine commandments and one disobedience,
Nine deities and one cult.

Arriving

by Maureen Daniels

I walk out the airport into thick sticky air
climb in to a rusty limousine
that will take me to you in the West Village
When the driver asks me if you live
on Greenwich Street or Greenwich Avenue
I tell him "I don't know" He laughs
pulls up to a liquor store past the graveyard
asks me what I drink comes back with a bottle of Tanqueray
Says "Sorry they didn't have any soda
or juice" "No problem" I tell him
drinking it straight from the bottle
turning my head upside down worrying what you're gonna say
I dizzy up to a pay phone Teenage boyfriend answers
says "She's at work" but he'll meet me outside
The driver picks up some lady walking out the Day-Go bar
"Just need to get my stuff outa the trunk" I remind him
Gives her a sloppy kiss while she falls into the front seat in giggles
I slide my bags across 12th Street
Long blond hair sweeps me into glass brownstone doors
He shoves my suitcases into the elevator box
Tells me to walk up the five flights to your apartment
cause there's no room for me in here
I'm feeling sick now from the gin
making its way into my senses
Tells me you'll be home soon
I take off my clothes while he washes your dishes
slither sweat drenched from the stink of New York summer
into your shower ice drops falling hard on my face
through my thoughts to sober me up
I take your towel that I've already gotten wet
from leaving the shower curtain open
wrap it around my love starved belly
make my way through puddles and your wood floor palette
of acrylics, nail polishes, Anais Nin diaries, handcuffs and velvet lingerie
to find a clearing in front of the fan turned up high
rest my wet head against the wall
wait to see you walk through that door
and finally start this life together

END GAME

Beguiled by Moby Dick, but forgiven.
Or Dirty Harry Part II

by Mary Ellen Timcheck

In 1945 John Steinbeck opened his novel *Cannery Row* by saying, "Cannery Row in Monterey in California is a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit, a nostalgia, a dream." In 1990, when I found myself stationed in Monterey, as a member of the Air Force, the description still applied to the quaint town along the sea.

Monterey sits atop a massive rock that juts out into the Pacific ocean 70 or so miles south of San Francisco. The morning fog dissipates around noon only to roll back in and swallow the town again around five. For an hour or so during the daily retreat and advance of the fog, the sunlight, refracted in the fine mist, softens even the jagged edges of the gnarled and twisted cyprus trees and blankets the town in a dream-like gauze.

In the interim, pure sunlight lays bare the salt damage caused by constant ocean breezes to the small, pastel homes set on manicured lots cut into the mountain. The faded paint and smooth boards of the restaurants lining the wharf at oceanside are a testament to the fact that, although the locals are wealthy by some definitions, they are not the super-rich of nearby Carmel.

While in Monterey, my Air Force cronies used to enjoy day trips to Carmel. There they would window shop at the elite stores and hope to bump into someone famous. They never bought anything there because as they used to joke, "If there were a street person in Carmel, you couldn't rent his cardboard box for less than \$1,500 a month."

One Friday after work, I walked into my cubical of a room to find Becky, my roommate, ripping one article of clothing after another out of her wall locker.

"What on earth are you doing?" I asked.

"Trying to figure out what to wear to Carmel tonight," she said while throwing a green sheath dress over her shoulder. I watched the garment scrunch into a wrinkled, shapeless pile of green linen as it hit the floor. "Want to go?"

"No, thanks," I said, slipping out of my standard-issue blue starched shirt and skirt. "I think I'm going to go down to The Cannery for a while and then just stick around here tonight."

"You sure?" she asked as she abandoned the search for the perfect outfit and concentrated on brushing the curl out of her thick mass of shoulder length brown hair. "A bunch of us heard that there is some sort of big party going on at a club there."

"No, really, I'm tired and just want to take it easy tonight," I said while jumping into my favorite pair of levis and Rolling Stones T-shirt.

"Might meet someone famous."

"Really, I don't think so," I said, irritated by the effort that my fellow Airmen put into their pursuit of the rich and famous.

"O-kay, suit yourself."

An hour later, Becky and few girls who lived a couple doors down from us had left for the evening, and I was headed down the steep path to the wharf, where I could buy a cup of fresh clam chowder and a sour dough roll from one of the restaurants that kept an open air market outside of their exclusive "Wharf" establishments. The usual throng of tourists on the boardwalk battled and battered one another as they jockeyed to get into and out of the few tacky, cramped souvenir shops nestled between the restaurants and deep-sea fishing boat docks.

The monkey man was at his post at the entrance to the wharf with his music box and a tiny monkey, its

tail long and curled, dressed in a massive yellow hat like Curious George. Vacationers 'oohed' and 'ahhed' as the monkey cranked up the music box and then jumped among the "customers", trying to coerce a dollar from them.

Within ten minutes I had my chowder and set out for The Cannery. I let the chowder cool while I strolled along the oceanside path and enjoyed the way the breeze buffeted my steps while I walked. The constant bark of the sea lions lazing on the rocks a few dozen feet from the path assaulted my ears. I walked slowly, fascinated, as usual, with the lazy beasts that had learned to beg for food from passing tourists while simultaneously lolling and sunning themselves on the rocks.

About half way to The Cannery, I sat on a small bluff of grass to eat my chowder. I used chunks of the roll, instead of my plastic spoon, to sop up the thick stew and ate slowly, savoring my treat. While I ate, I



watched the sea lions and figured that I was sitting right about where Steinbeck had placed Dora's whore house.

The Cannery had once been one of the many sardine canneries Steinbeck immortalized. It had since been painted red and transformed into a three story arcade of odd shops and game rooms. A psychic or two, a tarot reader, an ice cream shop, a game room, a tie-dye clothing store, a used book store and several other shops filled The Cannery. In some areas, where not all the boards had been replaced during renovation, the stench of dead fish lingered. Here and there, along the edge of the ocean, rusted-out evidence of the giant pipes once so important to the canneries and in Steinbeck's mind, home to Mack and Hazel and Eddie, characters whose best intentions inevitably didn't pan out the way they planned. I figured that if all of these places had once existed, Dora's could have, as well.

When I finished with my chowder, I walked the rest of the way to The Cannery, strolled around for a while, bought a used copy of Moby Dick and headed home.

While retracing my step along the path, I studied the worn cover of the book, looking for clues as to who else might have owned it before me, instead of watching where I was going. As I rounded a gentle bend where the path ran along the side of the most exclusive restaurant in town, I bumped into a large man and dropped my book. It landed a few feet from where we stood.

"I'm so sorry," the man and I said at the same time, both bending down to retrieve the book.

As I squatted, I said, "No, really, I wasn't looking where I was going."

For the first time, I got a good look at the person I had slammed into. Even in faded jeans, a plain blue t-shirt and dark sunglasses, the tanned-handsomely roughened face and graying hair were unmistakable. I had bumped into the mayor of Carmel.

"Neither was I. Guess we're both to blame," he said, handing me my book.

"Uh-huh," was all I could say as the realization of who I was talking to took hold. "Don't say anything stupid! And DON'T act like a tourist," I ordered to myself, realizing that I wasn't as immune to star power as I thought I was. I took a deep breath, composed myself and thanked him for retrieving my book.

"I m..." he said by way of introduction.

"I-I know," I said. "O-kay that WAS stupid," I chastised myself. "I'm Mary Ellen. Nice to meet you."

"Well, Mary Ellen it was nice meeting you too. Sorry I bumped into you," he said, his deep voice resonating in the cavernous space that just moments before had held my brain.

"N-no," I stammered, "I'm sorry I ran into you," I said.

"Enjoy your book. It's a good read," he said walking off the way I had just came.

I stood there for a moment watching him walk down the path until a group of five or six vacationers recognized him and circled like the great whites that occasionally attacked local surfers. They went into a frenzied search for pens and paper. I watched the mayor smile politely and scribble little notes to his overzealous fans. Before heading back to my barracks, I was grateful that even though I probably hadn't made a great impression on him at least I hadn't acted like those people.

"So, how was the club?" I asked Becky when she walked through the door a few hours later. "See any stars?"

"No, total bust. What did you do?" she asked, hanging up the green dress she had tossed on the floor earlier that day.

"Oh, you know, strolled down to The Cannery and literally bumped into the mayor of Carmel on my way home," I answered, trying to keep the snide tone out of my voice.

Her blue eyes flickered with disbelief and then her entire face twisted as she realized that I was telling the truth. "Tell me the whole story," she said.

I enjoyed watching her envy grow as she made me repeat the entire episode over and over. Finally, she let me off the hook, saying, "We go looking for famous people and you go down to The Cannery and walk right into CLINT EASTWOOD! It just ain't fair!"

"Yep," I said, grinning from ear to ear. "No one ever said life is fair."



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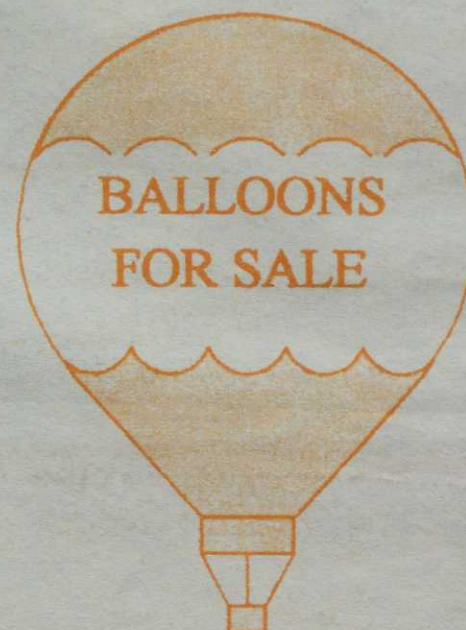


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