

THE CRUCIBLE

LOCK HAVEN UNIVERSITY

The Crucible

Contents

THE CRUCIBLE

Fall 1986

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Lock Haven University,
Archives & Records Centre

Rec. _____ Date _____
Source: _____ Loc. _____

The Crucible thanks : our advisors Richard Cecil and Joe Nicholson; Chris Fisher, of the Eagle Eye, for technical assistance; and the staff of the Duplicating department.

The Crucible

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Works were selected from submissions, by unanimous editorial vote,
for special recognition and monetary awards.
These awards were not granted to Crucible staff members.

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David Houston

Our Last Morning

I remember our last morning together;
before, carrying my book, my orange,
and a final kiss with you,
you disappeared behind the dark windows
of the bus that returned you to school.

"Forced" together by my narrow bed,
we were entangled when I awoke.
Nestled together like two spoons in a drawer;
my knees pulled up behind yours,
your sleeping hands clinging to my left arm.
Wendy always clutched her stuffed rabbit that way,
long after it lost an eye and lots of hair.
Sparkles raced up my other arm,
caught under your shoulder. . .
but I let you continue sleeping.

Your lifeless sweater lay crumpled on the floor
having lost all its form and vitality
in being pulled away from you...
And suddenly I needed you to wake up
as I realized how I would lie
crumpled and lifeless
when you had gone from me.

Our Last Morning

I remember our last morning together
 before, carrying my book, my glasses,
 and a final kiss with you.
 You disappeared behind the dark windows
 of the bus that returned you to school.
 "Forced" together by my narrow bed,
 we were encased when I woke.
 Nestled together like two spoons in a drawer
 my knees pulled up behind yours,
 your sleeping hands clinging to my left arm.
 Wendy always clutched her stuffed rabbit that way,
 long after it lost an eye and lots of hair.
 Sparkles raced up my other arm,
 caught under your shoulder.
 But I let you continue sleeping.
 Your lifeless sweater lay crumpled on the floor
 having lost all its form and vitality
 as being pulled away from you.
 And suddenly I needed you to wake up
 as I realized how I would lie
 crumpled and lifeless
 when you had gone from me.

Through the long grass

Through the long grass
 we return to my car,
 our feet stirring up small moths;
 pale beige, the color
 of the limp maple flowers
 caught in your hair.

latin love song

at first you hear

2 Poems from Terminado

by a. m. yedos

then swift

quick click

the castanets careening

up delight...

and after comes

the moment

when the music's melody,

in a quiet murmuring

ends; the song

complete.

latin love song

at first you hear

soft tambourines

whispering surprise,

then swift

quick click

the castanets careening

up delight...

and after comes

the moment

when the music's melody,

in a quiet murmuring

ends; the song

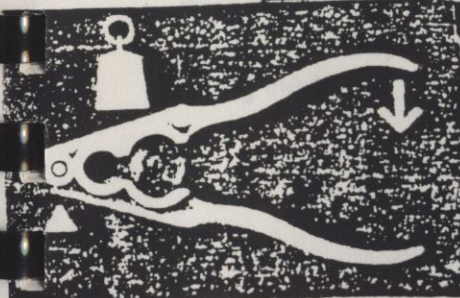
complete.

at 7:00 in the evening
in the summer:

the young,
harried
mother
quietly
sneaks out
the back
door
and then,
slowly, finds
her way
to the stream.



F.



The characters in the following short story, ST. NICHOLAS IN APRIL, are fictitious. Any resemblance to living persons is completely unintentional. This story is dedicated to my cousin, Mary, who is labeled retarded and to everyone who has been labeled by our society.

ST. NICHOLAS IN APRIL

By Christa M. Landas

Hummed strains---
 off key---drift
 through cracked plasterboard,
 accompanied by the squeaking
 rapture of an old double bed,
 as a retarded boy rocks
 on feather down to his own music . . .

St. Nicholas in April.

I can hear them playing again tonight: the two boys next door, labeled "retarded." They're playing with puppets, I can tell. Cracked plaster lets their muffled, slow voices drift into my apartment over the last few strains of a Clementi Sonata.

Sometimes I just like to stop and listen to them--the two boys. In a strange way, it's soothing, yet, frightening at times: their play is so real. The two are twins; look just alike, I forget what that's called. Anyway, it's sad. The mother always has her head down as if to apologize for bringing life--defective life--into this world. (I don't mean to sound cruel, but if you just could live here for a day . . .)

Bobby and Billy's father usually takes the boys for their exercise in the afternoons. Then, they come back home and are sent to their room to amuse themselves. They play grandma's old albums--mono--on the stereo. Elvis, Penny Arcade, and Frank Sinatra slip through the plaster into my living room and dance in time with the ecstatic squeaking of bed springs, as the boys keep time by bouncing on their old double bed. Soon she can't take it anymore, and Mr. Andrews comes to quiet them down. It's eleven o'clock now; I'm surprised they're still up . . . well, not really. What have Bobby and Billy got to do except sleep during the day and be restless during the night? The old springs now let me in on their secret theater.

Silence. "Bad, bad dog. You'll pay for that!"

"Woof, woof," comes the muffled reply. Someone gets hit, probably Billy.

"You bad dog. If you don't behave, I'll have you put in a home somewhere!"

God, so real. I'm startled back to reality. Unconsciously, my body has tensed during their exchange. I relax it now. I wonder how often the boys have been threatened when they have "misbehaved." Misbehavior is not a term the boys would understand; for that matter, I don't really think I understand it.

I read somewhere the other day that about ten million children are handicapped in this country. It seems so unfair; yet at times like these, with Mozart echoing through my apartment and Bobby's soft murmurings about life drifting through the old plasterboard, it seems as if he and his brother are the lucky ones. They are both labeled retarded, but they have so much knowledge from observations stored inside their seventeen-year-old bodies, if only it weren't wasted on these damn cheap walls.

In 1975, the United States Congress felt guilty. So, it passed the Education of All Handicapped Children Act--better known as PL 94-142. I guess it was a nice gesture on their part, but they did these children a horrible disservice by defining them--labeling in a world where labels stick . . . forever.

The law defines these kids as "mentally retarded, hard of hearing, seriously disturbed, orthopedically impaired, or children with specific learning disabilities, who by reason thereof require special education and related services." Yeah, I guess Bobby and Billy fit in there somewhere.

Yesterday, Bobby's mom knocked at my door. She whispered, "Hi," and a crooked smile flickered across her dry lips. As if conscious of my gaze, she ran her tongue over her pale lips before continuing with her request. She asked me if I would watch Bobby.

Billy was running with his kite and fell over a rock, splitting open his chin. She and her husband, Gale, were taking him to the hospital for stitches. Bobby was scared for his brother, so she wanted someone Bobby knew and trusted to care for him while they were gone. Of course I agreed to help. Who refuses in a time of another's need?

When I went over to apartment number thirty-six, Bobby's mom told me Bobby had cried himself into exhaustion and was sleeping on the master bed. She and her husband hurried out the door with Billy, who looked tired and also excited about going out--he got to do it so rarely. He had a Snoopy towel pressed against his chin; he smiled as the door closed, leaving me with a sleeping seventeen-year-old boy.

I settled down with an old Dickens' novel I had already read several times, but in the rush to get over to Bobby's I grabbed it like an old habit. After the first nineteen chapters, I lost my concentration and realized it was because a persistent humming was coming from the master bedroom. I wasn't sure how long the humming had been floating through the cramped apartment, but I assumed Bobby was up and maybe somewhat scared about his brother. I laid the yellowed volume down on the arm of my chair and stood up, listening. The pitch of Bobby's humming increased, but it sounded like his usual happy self-serenade . . . Old St. Nicholas in April.

Even though he was awake, I crept down the hall of worn rose petal wallpaper. I didn't want to scare him by just bursting in. Slowly I pushed open the bedroom door. I had forgotten about the cat, and I guess, like everyone else, I had forgotten Bobby was seventeen. Bob laughed out loud as the orange tabby, Viola, glided across his erect penis.

I had forgotten about the desires of young men, even young retarded men.

Quietly, I walked back out to my chair. I picked up the old novel, but I didn't feel like sitting. Society--something was wrong with it. It tends too often to forget about the "different" ones.

For a little over an hour, I stood contemplating what I had seen in Bob--a normalness. A key rattled in the lock and my attention was drawn away from the bricks, mortar and faded yellow-orange sky of coming darkness. Bill ran past his parents and me to tell Bobby about his adventure at the hospital.

The Andrews tried to thank me for staying with Bob, but I thanked them instead for the evening.

Today I heard the neighbors talking about the twins. "Mrs. Andrews just can't handle those boys any longer. It was all right when they were younger, but they're so big now. And she and Gale aren't getting any younger."

A cynical smile turned the corners of my mouth. She had never tried to handle the boys, and it had never been all right. The family was labeled--POOR ANDREWS WITH THE RETARDED TWINS. But it wasn't just Mrs. Andrews who couldn't deal with the boys, so I guess she really couldn't be faulted.

I had known the Andrews to talk of sending the guys away to a special school in Ohio, but I never thought anything would come of it because they weren't very well off. Then again, I guess Congress did everyone a favor with all their fancy legislation. Now, the guys will get to go on an exciting trip, and Mr. and Mrs. Andrews will get a chance to find themselves. Sitting in this silence--empty, haunting silence--I suppose it will be the best for everyone.

"It's going to be quiet around here without the haunting reality of Old St. Nicholas in April," I murmur to my walls and adjust the volume on the stereo to let Mozart fill the place.

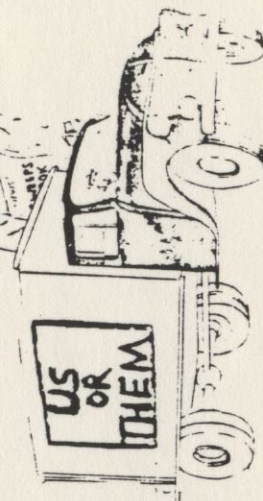
THE MUSIC MAN

So each day
 He holds his head up;
 Sweat dripping down his face
 As he sees all the people
 Working-
 Can he make them happy
 Or will he fail?
 Failure,
 To him,
 Means oblivion.
 How can he,
 A simple man,
 Fill the expectations of so many.

Darkness
 Anxiety shoots thru him,
 He clutches his most loved possession
 Curtains open,
 Lights dazzle so bright,
 Blinding him;
 Anxiety dwindles.
 His hand touches his guitar
 Softly now.

Sounds surge from his
 Deafening him. He begins,
 Anxiety is coming back,
 Again he feels his guitar in his hands.

Guitar and man seem to blend together,
 Becoming one, both possessed by the other.
 Motion becomes natural,
 And the crowd is no longer there.
 He is alone with his guitar.



THE MUSIC MAN

So much fear
But he holds his head up;
Sweat dribbling down his face
As he sees all the people.
Wondering-
Can he make them happy
Or will he fail?
Failure,
To him,
Seems obvious.
How can he,
A simple man,
Fill the expectations of so many.

Darkness-
Anxiety shoots thru him,
He clutches his most loved possession.
Curtains open,
Lights dazzle so bright,
Blinding him;
Anxiety dwindles.
His hand touches his guitar
Gently now.

Sounds emerge from his amplifier
Deafening him. He begins to tremble.
Anxiety is coming back,
Again he feels his guitar in his hands.

Guitar and man seem to blend together,
Becoming one, both possessed by the other.
Motion becomes natural.
And the crowd is no longer there.
He is alone with his guitar.

Suddenly he stops,
 Looks up and sees all the people.
 Applause and cheers are heard.
 He smiles timidly
 And quietly walks off the stage.

Until tomorrow . . .

by Laurie Guillermin

I don't believe you said that I don't believe it
 I know it, God. I knew you wouldn't understand you never
 understand)
 As we can feel offended.
 Surely I suspect that
 she needs this anger
 as much as she used to need hugs and her hurts kissed
 and her nightmares dissipated.
 This is harder, hurtful.
 who I am is of no importance.
 No more.
 We seek for anything but what she is
 becoming.
 A more more painful birth.

 I remember her newborn
 -his and real,
 anxious eyes.
 Souls reaching through bodies.
 Acute eyes knowing more of me than anyone ever
 No words needed.

 Now connected only by words
 Here, not mine.
 A tired little play.
 A second birth.

 (and I didn't even know our bodies were still connected
 until it started to tear and I can hug her anymore she
 hates it, gets all stiff and turns into all elbows and
 sharp shoulder blades don't touch me.)

MOTHER/DAUGHTER

A script, demanded, I follow

(say this

no I don't feel that

say it

no that's not really me

say this now!

OK dammit . . .

oh god, I don't believe you said that I don't believe it

I knew it. God. I knew you wouldn't understand you never understand)

So she can feel offended.

Wearily I suspect that

she needs this anger

as much as she used to need hugs and her hurts kissed

and her nightmares dissipated.

This is harder, hurtful.

Who I am is of no importance.

No room.

No room for anything but what she is

becoming.

A much more painful birth.

I remember her newborn

old and real,

ancient eyes.

Souls touching through bodies,

Ancient eyes knowing more of me than anyone ever

No words needed.

Now connected only by words

Hers, not mine,

A tired little play.

A second birth.

(and I didn't even know our bodies were still connected until it started to tear and I can hug her anymore she hates it, gets all stiff and turns into all elbows and sharp shoulder blades don't touch me.)

Ancient eyes now young and hard and flat.
I get hurt.
I hurt back.
Those hard flat eyes show pain and triumph.
I say and do what I swore I wouldn't.

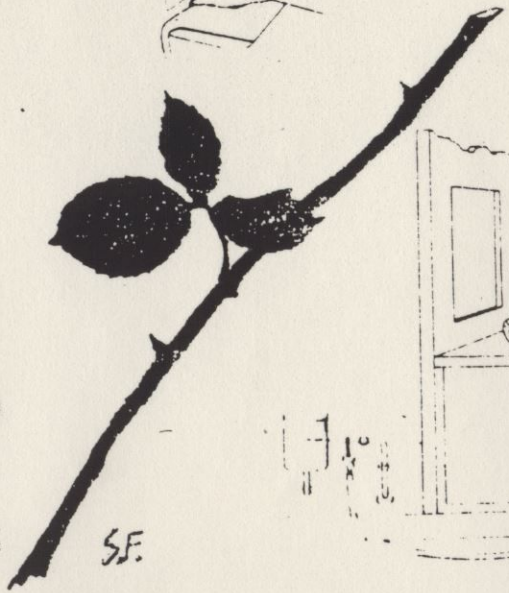
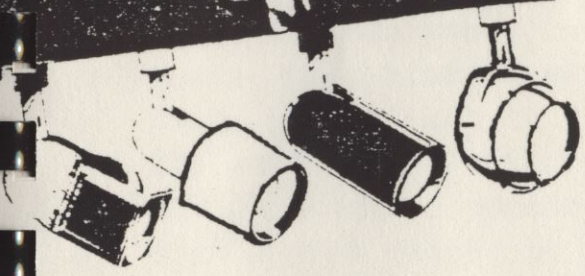
(But I don't curse her, no, with my mother's curse-
"someday I hope you have a daughter just like you and then
you'll know what it's like"; and I try not to think of
myself young and my own mother but I whisper a half curse
to her to damn you, you wished this on me how could you when
you knew how much it hurt.)

Not cursing her
 is my only triumph.
My defeat is not being
 able to connect this child
 almost woman
To that baby.

by Kathleen Houser



ENTER TODAY!



SF

OPINIONS OF AN OLD BLACK WOMAN

"Where was I when
John F. Kennedy died?"

She said,

"You're kinda young to be

Asking that kinda question. **2 Poems by**

Don't you think?"

She ruffled her thack, **W. F. Logan**

And appeared to ponder while

Bright cars passed by.

"A better question would be

Where was he?"

She laughed lightly at this.

"He should've been home,

Making a living,

Keepin' his nose outta

Other people's dothers.

That's where he shoulda been.

If you're askin' me."

She wiped her brow

With an evaporated klessex.

"It's gonna be a hot one.

That I really know.

Yessiree, what one."

OPINIONS OF AN OLD BLACK WOMAN

"Where was I when
 John F. Kennedy died?"
 She said.
 "You're kinda young to be
 Asking that kinda question,
 Don't you think?"
 She ruffled her thick, black hair
 And appeared to ponder while
 Bright cars passed by.
 "A better question would be
 Where was he?"
 She laughed lightly at this.
 "He should've been home,
 Making a living,
 Keepin' his nose outta
 Other people's bothers.
 That's where he shoulda been,
 If you're askin' me."
 She wiped her brow
 With an evaporated kleenex.
 "It's gonna be a hot one.
 That I really know.
 Yessiree, a hot one."
 Drive-thru with that ugly rack hanging
 Onto my car like a cloth on a metal tree.
 But my mind brightened at the
 Picture of the two of us cuddling
 In the back seat at the end of Logger's road.
 I learned to suck that night,
 My first time.
 The only real time.
 Since then there've been many,
 But none so good,
 As when I did it with Morris,
 Singing over my shoulder,
 "Be my little baby."

Then Eddie's voice came back on,
memory gone.
Everything else was gone, Lynn.
The old car, the drive-ins, the

PASSING THROUGH

As I turned the knob on the car radio
I heard,
Frankie Valli: "Walk like a man"
Then Paul Young: "Every time you go away"
Then Tammy Wynette: "Stand by your man"
Then Eddie Money: "Take me home tonight,"
And as I listened, I heard a voice
I'd remembered from the past, singing,
"Be my little baby."
I knew that voice, it took me back-
Way back- to a time when I sat
In a car very much like the one I'm in now.
A car, though, much bigger, and one
That held fond memories.
The last time I heard he voice,
The voice of Ronnie Spector,
I was holding the steering wheel
In one hand and a girl named Lynn
In the other. I suddenly remembered
The way she sat, the way she moved,
The way she smelled, and the soft
Sigh as her silky legs crossed.
I recalled perfectly the stops, the laughs,
The sodas we drank stopped at the
Drive-ins with that ugly rack hanging
Onto my car like a sloth in a metal tree.
But my mind brightened at the
Picture of the two of us cuddling
In the back seat at the end of Logger's road.
I learned so much that night.
My first time.
The only real time.
Since then there've been many,
But none so good,
As when I did it with Ronnie.
Singing over my shoulder,
"Be my little baby."

Trains n Rain

-or-

Then Eddie's voice came back on, *Days In The Life*

And I smiled, the memory gone.

Everything else was gone, Lynn, *by Ron Schwalbe*

The old car, the drive-ins, the

Friends, but it was still good to know

That Ronnie was still there.

Maybe someone else would get *I was raining and a train was passing by*

The chance to feel like I did. *All part of the daily grind of the*

I did hope this. And I drove on. *Sure. Bogus. I saw Jack walking*

"How about Ron?" he asked me.

"I don't know. How's he?"

He always shook his head. "Oh Ron- I'm doomed. Remember how I said I was going away up last night? I blew it man. I really kicked ass for a while, but then I had to go and try to take a nap. I figured I'd just shut my eyes for a half hour- I set my alarm to everything. I never even heard it! Shut it off or something. Boy I'm a fool!"

I know the deal how he felt. Happens every time. Every time. You can't win. Either you turn it off in your sleep, or set it wrong, or it doesn't work, or your roommate turns it off for you. One time I even unplugged it in my sleep. I couldn't believe it when I woke up and my surprise found my alarm clock unplugged. Good grief.

And Ron, that ain't the worst of it- today I found out I got two more tests coming up from. For today and loud. Just two days, including today, to study for those and do all that other work that already got. I'm doomed."

Along: What's that noise? Try it dig deeper to get away Ohhh ...

Somebody's sleepy voice from other side of the room my roommate: "Ron ..."

Ron: "Ron ..."

Reach across the room make a step or up ledge for the source of the terrible noise ...

"You're supposed to unplug it Ron!"

Punch the button again: Uh! Finally silence collapse back into slumber ...

And then, right away again (30 minutes later):

The exact same thing.

And then, right away again (20 minutes later):

The exact same thing.

And then, a wonderfully long time later:

Suddenly again: Whoa, this is so nice, sleeping like this- WHAT? Sit UP fast what time is it? Oh 11:30! My God ... That was my favorite class! Now lay there make sure it isn't ... Good, I guess I can go back to sleep. ... Ohhh yoooooosss ... Get woken up later ...

Uh what time is it? Oh, 11:45 I can still sleep. Wait a minute ... This is a

Tuesday-Thursday ... at 11:30 that class was less than half way over - You'd've still gone to it! FATSI! (Sighs)

I had slept through my first class so I found somebody who had gone and asked him what I had missed. I even tried to get some work done. Later, while I was over at the AM/PM buying an orange juice, a long train came by and kept me on that side of the

Trains 'n Rain
-or-
A Few Days In The Life

by Kurt Schwalbe

I was walking down the stairs to Bentley. It was raining and a train was passing by the campus. As usual. Trains 'n rain. Trains 'n rain. All part of the daily grind of the "college experience" here. My college "career". Yah. Sure. Bogus. I saw Jack walking ahead of me and caught up to him.

"How ya do'n Ron?" he asked me.

"Alright I guess. How're you?"

He slowly shook his head. "Oh Ron- I'm doomed. Remember how I said I was going stay up last night? I blew it man. I really kicked ass for a while, but then I had to go an' try to take a nap! I figured I'd just shut my eyes for a half hour- I set my alarm 'n everything. I never even heard it! Shut it off or something. Boy I'm a fool!"

I knew too well how he felt. Happens every time. Every time. You can't win. Either you turn it off in your sleep, or set it wrong, or it doesn't work, or your roommate turns it off for you. One time I even unplugged it in my sleep. I couldn't believe it when I woke up and to my surprise found my alarm clock unplugged. Good grief.

"And Ron, that ain't the worst of it- today I found out I got two more tests coming up friday. For crying out loud. Just two days, including today, to study for those and do all that other work that I already got. I'm doomed."

Ahhg! What is that noise Try it dig deeper to get away Ohhh . . .

Somebody's sleepy voice from other side of the room my roommate : "Ron . . .

Ron . . . Ro-!"

Reach around fumble make it stop sit up lunge for the source of the terrible noise claw at it grab it hit it slam it! Punch the button! Again! It won't sto-!

"-on! Will you plea . . . ummgfle um Ro-!"

Punch the button again! Uhh! Finally silence collapse back into sleeeeph . . .

And then, right away again (ten minutes later) :

THE exact same thing.

And then, right away again (ten minutes later) :

THE exact same thing.

And then, a wonderfully long time later :

Suddenly alert - Wow, this is so nice, sleeping like thi- WHAT? Sit UP fast what time is it? Oh 11:30? NOooo . . . That was my favorite class! Now lay there make sure it isn't . . . Good, I guess I can go back to sleep . . . uhhh yeeeessss . . . Get woken up later : Uh what time is it? Oh, 11:45 I can still sleep. Wait a minute . . . This is a Tuesday-Thursday -- at 11:30 that class was less than half way over -- I could've still gone to it! RATS! Ratsratsratsratsrats!

I had slept through my first class so I found somebody who had gone and asked him what I had missed. I then tried to get some work done. Later, while I was over at the AM/PM buying an umbrella, a long train came by and kept me on that side of the

tracks for ten or more minutes, making me late for my next class. Anytime that I was late that semester, it seemed to happen with that particular class, through sheer bad luck. After the class was over I asked a friend if anything important had happened the first few minutes. He said that a big, important project had been announced, and that I had better ask the professor personally for the details. So I did. The man sat there, as I tried to explain why I had once again been late, with a smug, bored but patient expression. I felt as if he didn't believe a word that I had said. The project my friend had told me about, a giant accounting program, would take up a lot of time to do. And I was behind in that class already for one reason or another. I went to dinner. It was just wonderful. Two different delicacies to choose from : breaded veal or breaded fish. Mmmmmmm. It's always nice to have a satisfying meal after a long day.

Wet from the rain outside, I climb the stairs thinking about the test that I'm about to attempt to pass. My footsteps echo coldly against the bright white walls. Glancing at my watch, I'm glad to see that I'm not late again to this class, especially today. I make sure I have my calculator for this test. The professor walks into the classroom with the tests in hand. We quiet down realizing that he's about to speak. "I think you guys should be able to take this test without using calculators."

You said that we'd be allowed to use calculators," several of us respond, not willing to believe what we just heard.

He answers us with his characteristic smug expression, "I *know* that you can use them in industry and down at the terminals for your assignments, but that isn't any excuse for not knowing the basics. No calculators." We sit there in shock as he passes the tests out. We can't use calculators during the test. When he announced it he said we would be able to use calculators during the test. When we studied for the test we used calculators to help solve the problems. Today we came here expecting to be able to use calculators to help solve the problems. Today we came here expecting to be able to use calculators during the test. And on the day of the test, just before he hands he tests out, he announces that we can't use calculators. He does this by justifying it with "the necessity of knowing the basics", after stating what happens concerning the subject in industry and in doing assignments here, which is his usual justification for screwing us over. Instead of "having his cake and eating it to" like he usually does, he's "having his cake and eating it to" to the power of ten. So we sit there failing the test. Our college career.

Sharp terrible noise forces me awake sit up lunge for the button on the box hit it 'til it's dead fall back to bed . . . Too soon there it is *again* - lunge for it - this time somehow find the will, the inspiration to get up *out* of the bed I did it! Finally! I was able to get up! Somehow get to class on time - I make it. What a relief. It feels so good to actually have made it to my first class with no real trouble, and on time to. Telling my friend Don afterwards how I'm so glad I made it we laugh about it what a relief don't have to worry about it about getting up 'til next time uhh yes . . . get through the day pretty much with ease - yes suddenly it's dinner time and I'm eating in Bentley what's that? from over my left shoulder I hear an impatient voice calling me "Hey Ron! Ron! . . . *Ron!*" for some reason I want to ignore it- it's hard to concentrate on- the scene in Bentley fades away to a poster that's tacked up on the wall beside my bed, seen through my bleary sleep-filled eyes "Ron!" I turn over and see Jack looking down at me. "Ron, you better get up!"

"What? What TIME is it?" I start to sit up, see the clock, and flop back down "Ohhhh no. Not again!" I swing my legs around off the bed, and slam my feet on the floor in anger and frustration. "Rats! Not again! Not my first class again!"

Jack shakes his head slowly and has a slight grin on his face. "Oh Ron, that's bad."

"Ah Jack . . . Shut up! Well, I'm glad that you woke me up."

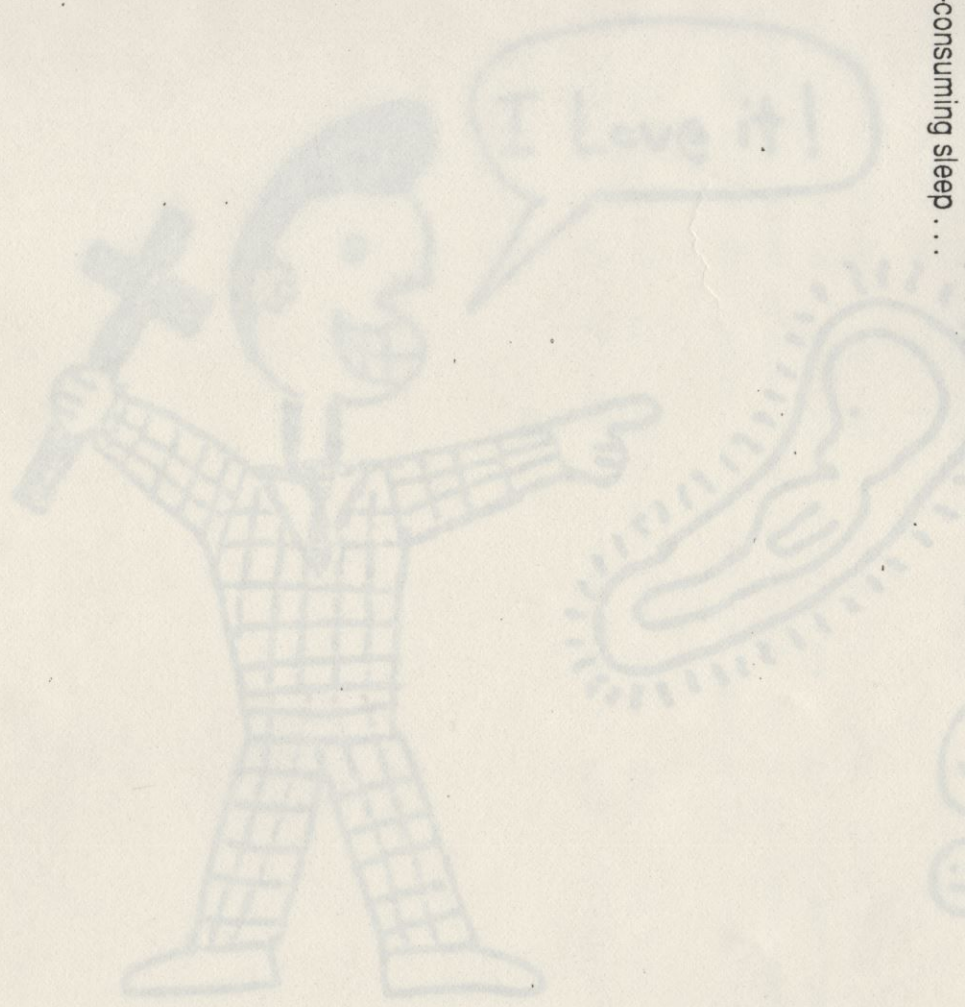
"Ron, guess what happened now? That professor that I have for that one class that I stayed up all night for? Well he didn't come in today so all that I went through last night was a waste of time. Doesn't that figure? I finally am able to successfully stay up all night without falling asleep ahead of time, do a lot of work, and the guy doesn't show up! Doesn't that figure?"

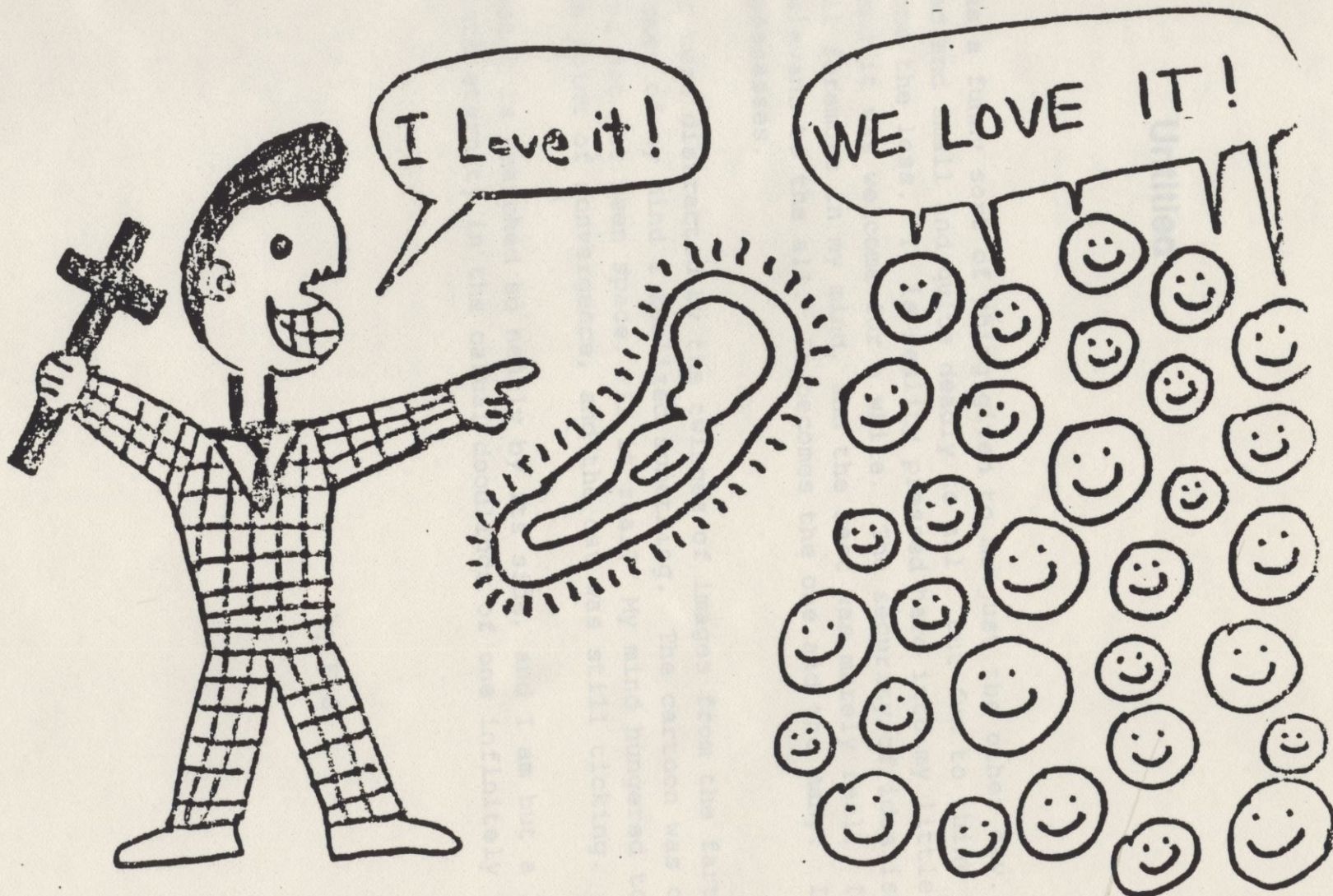
"Huh. It figures, yes it certainly does."

"Hey Ron, you going to come to lunch with me now?"

I look at the clock again. 12:32. "Yeah, I guess. There's no use trying to go to class now."

The food was as terrible as usual. Even if you can get past the taste of it to stuff down a good amount so that you're somewhere's near being full, it still has a good chance of getting you by playing tricks with your stomach. After Bentley I went back to my room, my stomach feeling like the main course and desert were at war. There was eons worth of work to deal with, but I couldn't do much more than collapse on my bed and hope the trouble in my stomach would soon stop. I layed there, helplessly feeling the rhythmic sound of the rain starting up again lull me into a long, deep, precious-time-consuming sleep . . .





I WANT TO GO HOME
My name is Toto,
And what I say is true.
There is a
That you folks never knew.
The journey doesn't matter,
Only the words of Oz.
If you ask me why

Untitled

There was a funny sort of thing given to me just the other day.
It is red and small and quite deadly to all, but fun to think
about none the less. It is reality pressed hard into my little
world, and it was welcome for a while. The security of idealism
was still foremost in my mind, and the rest was merely real. It is
still relevant to the all. It becomes the one and the many. It
merely possesses.

As I sit here distracted by the twinges of images from the farth-
est reaches of my mind I realized something. The cartoon was over,
and I had not yet seen space. Is it real? My mind hungered to
find the point of convergence, and the cat was still ticking.

The plastic is peached so neatly by its side, and I am but a line
drawn into eternity in the casual doodlings of one infinitely
insane.

by F.S.

"Each must play his part."
"If you do all you can do,
Then you'll have a heart."
Oz whispered to the Lion,
"Walk all, side by side."
"If you love your brother,
Then you'll get your pride."
Oz said to the Scarecrow,
"Just endure Liza's pains."
"If you leave out your wrongs,
Then you'll not your brains."
Oz called to Dorothy,
"Now you've always known."
"If you love your friends,
Then you'll have a home."

by Stephen Zoldi

I WANT TO GO HOME

My name is Toto,

And what I say is true.

There is a story of Oz

That you folks never knew.

The journey doesn't matter,

Only the words of Oz.

If you ask me why

I can only say because.

The Tinman said to the Wizard,

"Let me have a heart!"

The Wizard said to the Tinman,

"Each must play his part."

The Lion screamed, behind them all,

"Let me have my pride!"

The Scarecrow said to the Wizard,

"Can I have some brains?"

The Wizard looked at the Scarecrow,

"Just endure life's pains."

Dorothy held Toto and said,

"I want to go home."

The Wizard smiled at Dorothy,

"Home you've always known."

Oz turned to the Tinman,

"Each must play his part."

"If you do all you can do,

Then you'll have a heart."

Oz whispered to the Lion,

"Walk all, side by side."

"If you help your brother,

"Then you'll get your pride."

Oz said to the Scarecrow,

"Just endure life's pains."

"If you learn from your wrongs,

Then you'll get your brains."

Oz smiled at Dorothy,

"Home you've always known."

"If you love your friends,

Then you'll have a home."

by Stephen Zoldi

And So She Pounded the Edges, but Could Not Escape
Her Song

Frail female, singing,
leaning over a piano,
her fingers hanging heavy
like swelling drops,
then falling
to splash silver and grey
against the window.
Grey pounding grey
sometimes growing more intense,
threatening
to suddenly shatter-
to break through,
but then subsiding.
Sometimes seeming
to be fizzling out,
but never really growing slower,
or reaching an end.
Her face is twisted, pained.
She shakes, and could be crying
but she is only singing,
muttering inaudibly into her rain.

by Syd Noman

The Silence

Conversations across the way
 die.
 Random cars
 drive by.
 It's too quiet tonight
 too much is happening for silence.
 The moon in the moon is
 amidst silent stars
 nestled in black skies.
 The settled leaves in trees
 are swaying from the
 offshore breeze blowing by.
 I can smell the salted air
 and I can feel it against my hair
 as it whispers in my ears
 the secrets of happiness
 the pains of loneliness
 the wisdom of years.
 The crash of every wave
 the weep and sigh of
 each man and woman today
 are the lessons learned
 before the laughter
 from across the way.
 And a neighbor complains
 about the noise
 what noise?
 The conversations across the way
 die
 and a random car drives
 by.

Three Poems by
K. John Russell

The Silence

Conversations across the way
die.

Random cars
drive by.

It's too quiet tonight
too much is happening for silence.

The man in the moon is asleep
amidst silent stars
nestled in black skies.

The settled leaves in trees
are swaying from the
offshore breeze blowing by.

I can smell the salted air
and I can feel it against my hair

as it whispers in my ears
the secrets of happiness

the pains of loneliness
the wisdom of years.

The crash of every wave
the weep and sigh of
each man and woman today
are the lessons learned

before the laughter
from across the way.

And a neighbor complains
about the noise

what noise?

The conversations across the way
die

and a random car drives
by.

Some Scorpion is Swimming in my Brains

I am so bored
 I am so bored because I love you
 I am so bored that boredom
 is pouring my brains out of my skull
 spilling out my eyes and ears and mouth
 splashing onto my chest and shoulders
 and dripping onto the floor
 puddling-like a small lake of my brains
 and my body is being stung
 As a scorpion pricks his tail
 into a grasshopper's frail body
 paralyzing it into stillness
 as claws clench down on its leg and body
 and two mandible jaws
 reach forward to scrape eyes
 and pluck face matter
 to chomp and chew for food
 And I become completely fascinated
 enthralled
 to the point where I
 am
 the grasshopper
 until my attention, my fascination, my
 momentary withdrawal from boredom
 is shattered by some
 asshole barging in my room
 to ask if I have a quarter
 "No" I say
 and it leaves me
 to boredom again
 So where are my brains
 and who is swimming there?
 probably some hungry scorpion.

Because I Love You

I'm hitting you because I love you
 he said as he slapped my bare ass
 and I could feel it reddening beneath his
 huge, stiff, cold hand.
 I could see his face in my mind
 and how I hated that,
 his eyes would be focused with
 red squinting yolks that were on fire
 and his nose would whistle with every breath he took in
 and his teeth would grit together
 and I could tell he was so damn mad at me
 even though I was sorry.

Some day he said
 you will understand
 but I didn't understand then.

Jesus Christ who turned off the god damn air-conditioner?
 it rang through the entire house.

I heard it a floor away through closed doors
 and I felt it vibrate the floor I was sitting on
 and nothing but blank aaah was in my head..

My heart pumped faster with every word he spoke,
 It's one hundred degrees outside

(and the sun is hot
 and the birds are singing in a stale breeze
 and the green grass is browning
 and the water is going to be on fire soon)

and it's been a long god damn day.

I heard his metal book hit the counter-top
 and I thought of how the mail he brought in
 would spread itself out on the surface
 like a displayed deck of cards
 before another hand of poker.

It wasn't me and I didn't want to go down there
 to that place where he stood brewing and ready to unleash,
 but I had to go and account and so I went
 and answered with 'What?' as if I had not heard him.
 The god damn air-conditioner he said, the god damn air-conditioner!
 We found the circuit breaker kicked off
 and a little later
 I'm sorry he said for yelling the way I did,
 you see I've had a hard day.
 It's o.k. I had to say
 because I could not talk back
 or slap his ass with huge, cold hands
 it's o.k.
 someday I will understand

Slam! the door went off the hinges
 Crunch! went the floorboards and beams under each foot he put down
 as he stomped his way toward me
 and I was alone in the house with him
 and my fear of God was my only hope.
 And he stepped up next to me a foot higher
 and he hovered over my face.
 I had nowhere to look but right into those
 red squinting yolks
 one inch away that looked through my entire soul.
 The world I knew began to slip away from me
 and I was alone
 And I became so small and insignificant
 as to almost not exist (at all)
 and how I fucking hated that.
 He spoke his words

Wa Wou re woreen raaaaa?

They were so loud in yet a whisper
 that I could not understand what he said
 but I knew what he was saying.

It was thunder
 and it knocked down trees
 and it shook the earth
 and it shook my soul
 and God listened
 because I had become the fear I had entertained.

I really don't have the time I said
 silence was filling the connection

(and I'm out of money
and I'm not feeling very well
and my car is in the shop, broken down
and it's one million miles to drive)

and I just can't make it this time.
There was complete silence.
Nothing could change
And I could tell he was mad again
or maybe on the verge of crying.
I wasn't ready to give up
what I had finally found apart.
I'm waiting
I said, silence broken
for that some day.
What? he said, no idea what I was saying.
We said our goodbyes and hung up.
And in my silence I rationalized aloud,
Some day I said as a tear entered my eye
as it broke my heart
he will understand.

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