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table of contents

The Boss Lady's Editorial
part 1: Pluto's Alive... And So Are
New Planets.....2
part 2: Pluto's a "Dawrf Planet"3

Eye On The Sky

The IAU draft definition of
"planet" and "plutons"4

Eye On The Sky Insert:
Eris Be Her Name, Finding a Puffy
Planet, & a Space Debris factoid

Pluto demoted under new
definition of planet5
Pluto Not a Planet, Astronomers
Rule5
Pluto: And then there were 85
Definition of a Planet in the Solar
System5

Poetry (the passionate stuff)

Claire Blancett6
David Matson *art*6
Michael Ceraolo.....7
Edward Michael O'durr
Supranowicz *art*7
Jacob Alves7
Luis Cuauhtemoc Berriozabal8
Cheryl Townsend *art*8
Michael Swanson9
Jay Marvin *art*.....9
Alex Dimitrov10
Mike Hovancsek *art*10
Suzanne Richardson
Harvey, Ph.D.11
Nick Brazinsky *art*11

Rangzen Shanti12
Eric Bonholtzer *art*12
Valorie Mall13
Rose E. Grier *art*.....13
Nathan Jeffries13

Prose (the meat & potatoes stuff)

Mel Waldman.....14
Aaron Wilder *art*15
Pat Dixon16
Damion Hamilton20
Kenneth DiMaggio28

Performance Art

the final 10 minute feature at the
2006 Society of Professional
Journalism Expo's Chicago Poetry
Showcase of "A Celebration of the
First Amendment"36

Including the poems

People's Rights Misunderstood.....36
Everything Was Alive & Dying37
The State of the Nation40
True Happiness in the New
Millennium41
Burn it In43
(*Images of te live reasing on pages 36 &*
39-44 photographed by J. Yotko)

Scars art

2 (photographed at the largest radio telescope
in the world - Arecibo Observatory in Puerto
Rico), 9 (Wainaiie), 35 (display car at
Milwaukee Art Museum). Cover studio image
is of a styrofoam mannequin head, with devil's
horns on it. Happy Halloween.

the boss lady's editorial

part 1: Pluto's Alive... & so are new planets



Okay, okay, I know cc&d covered this in the April 2006 issue (v159), but... I've been trying to find out if the International Astronomical Union (the big whigs, I mean, arbiters, in the Astronomy community since 1919) would consider Pluto a planet (I even emailed them about this, and of course they never responded). But they've finally made a decision, and if you're not an astronomy geek, you'd probably first hear about it from newspapers like USA Today.

Well, Pluto *is* a planet, and — here's a kick in the pants for you — its moon Charon is actually a *double planet* with Pluto (they orbit around each other, instead of a moon orbiting around a planet). So not only is Pluto a planet, but so is what we thought was Pluto's moon, Charon, which is *also* a planet. And if you remember the Asteroid Bely (of rocks between Mars, the end of the terrestrial planets, and Jupiter, at the beginning of the gas giant), there is an asteroid there, Ceres, that about 200 years ago was *first* thought of as a planet, until everyone decided that it was just part of the Asteroid belt. Well, apparently Ceres gets its planetary status back, according to the IAU.

But if something in the Asteroid Belt can be considered a planet, maybe something in the Kuyper Belt (the outer ice ring on our solar system, where some people believe Pluto is actually a Kuyper Belt object) can classify as a planet — especially if it's larger than Pluto. Scientists found such a planet, now with only its technical name of 2003 UB313 (the two scientists who discovered 2003 UB313 wanted to call it Xena, as the “x” planet, named after a female albeit television-based mythical creature, but other scientists have named the planet “Gabrielle”), but the IAU will probably decide on a name for this planet possibly next year.

The IAU has a lot of work to do — because with their new guidelines for defining planets, there are potentially 12 more objects they're studying to determine if our perception of the Solar System has more room to grow...

Janet Kuypers[®]

Janet Kuypers, Editor in Chief



editor photo is at (the radio telescope)
Arecibo Observatory, in Puerto Rico

part 2, 08/24/06:
Pluto's a "Dwarf Planet"

listening for the final news

You know, I wrote that previous editorial news, and... It's the morning of August 24th, I've lost Internet access because of the storms, and during the storms my neighbor's house was hit, so I've been outside watching all of the fire trucks and men putting out the flames licking over the roof of the house (it looks like the fire only started on the porch, so there really isn't that much damage).



I figured I might as well check on the fire since my Internet connection was out, which other than news radio, was the only way I could hear the new news listing from IAU about the status of Pluto. Apparently all of the newscasters are talking about how everyone in America has a real love of this unknown, unexplored planet which has an elliptical, angled orbit different from any of the other planets in this solar system. The newscasters don't bother to mention that NASA has a ship flying to explore Pluto right now too. And IAU has even shut down its server right now, because there must be so many requests to it that it can't handle the overload.

So... If Pluto is not a planet, what about Ceres in the Asteroid Belt, and Xena, I mean, 2003 UB313? Well, according to **National Geographic**, "It's no longer part of an exclusive club, since there would be more than 40 of these dwarfs (what was long called "minor planets."), including the large asteroid Ceres and 2003 UB313, nicknamed Xena—a distant object slightly larger than Pluto." And I checked, in thenews.co.uk even reported from AP that Charon, the largest of Pluto's moons (which was originally considered a "double planet" with Pluto), it even failed to make the dwarf planet status.

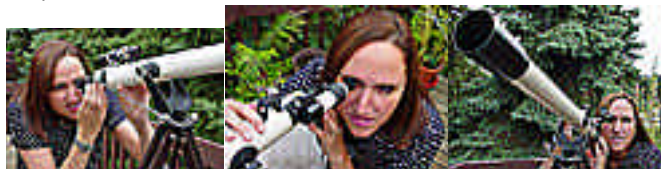
I checked out why... An AP article (released 8/24/2006 11:12 AM), said "Poor Pluto failed to make the new cut because its oblong orbit overlaps with Neptune's. It will now be a founding member of the new club of 'dwarf planets.'"

Well, apparently the 2,500 astronomers at the International Astronomical Union in Prague debated *more* during the past 12 days

So what does this mean for us (other than the rewriting of a lot of school textbooks)? Well, it means that the terrestrial planets and the gas giants can now be called "classical" planets (had to get that from brooksbulletin.com), but they added that "The definition also lays out a third class of lesser objects that orbit the sun - "small solar system bodies," a term that will apply to numerous asteroids, comets and other natural satellites."

Don't know what will happen to NASA's New Horizons spacecraft, on its 9 1/2-year journey to Pluto, but at least now with new definitions of new *kinds* of smaller planetesque bodies, we'll have more to study from and learn.


Janet Kuypers
Editor in Chief



The IAU draft definition of “planet” and “plutons”

The International Astronomical Union,
16. August 2006, Prague

The world's astronomers, under the auspices of the International Astronomical Union (IAU), have concluded two years of work defining the difference between “planets” and the smaller “solar system bodies” such as comets and asteroids. If the definition is approved by the astronomers gathered 14-25 August 2006 at the IAU General Assembly in Prague, our Solar System will include 12 planets, with more to come: eight classical planets that dominate the system, three planets in a new and growing category of “plutons” - Pluto-like objects - and Ceres. Pluto remains a planet and is the prototype for the new category of “plutons.”

With the advent of powerful new telescopes on the ground and in space, planetary astronomy has gone through an exciting development over the past decade. For thousands of years very little was known about the planets other than they were objects that moved in the sky with respect to the background of fixed stars. In fact the word “planet” comes from the Greek word for “wanderer”. But today hosts of newly discovered large objects in the outer regions of our Solar System present a challenge to our historically based definition of a “planet”.

At first glance one should think that it is easy to define what a planet is - a large and round body. On second thought difficulties arise, as one could ask “where is the lower limit?” - how large, and how round should an asteroid be before it becomes a planet - as well as “where is the upper limit?” -

The part of “IAU Resolution 5 for GA-XXVI” that describes the planet definition, states “A planet is a celestial body that (a) has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape, and (b) is in orbit around a star, and is neither a star nor a satellite of a planet.” Member of the Planet Definition Committee, Richard Binzel says: “Our goal was to find a scientific basis for a new definition of planet and we chose gravity as the determining factor. Nature decides whether or not an object is a planet.”

According to the new draft definition, two conditions must be satisfied for an object to be called a “planet.” First, the object must be in orbit around a star, while not being itself a star. Second, the object must be large enough (or more technically correct, massive enough) for its own gravity to pull it into a nearly spherical shape. The shape of objects with mass above 5×10^{20} kg and diameter greater than 800 km would normally be determined by self-gravity, but all borderline cases would have to be established by observation.

If the proposed Resolution is passed, the 12 planets in our Solar System will be Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Ceres, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, Charon and 2003 UB313. The name 2003 UB313 is provisional, as a “real” name has not yet been assigned to this object. A decision and announcement of a new name are likely not to be made during the IAU General Assembly in Prague, but at a later time. The naming procedures depend on the outcome of the Resolution vote. There will most likely be more planets announced by the IAU in the future. Currently a dozen “candidate planets” are listed on IAU’s “watchlist” which keeps changing as new objects are found and the physics of the existing candidates becomes better known.

from digital science:

Pluto demoted under new definition of planet

The new guidelines — introduced in Prague on Thursday after a week of debate by the 2,500 astronomers at the organization's conference — define what is a planet and what is not. Pluto didn't make the cut. Pluto has been considered a planet since its discovery in 1930. Under the new guidelines, it's now considered a "dwarf planet," leaving eight planets — Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.

Pluto, which is smaller than Earth's moon, doesn't fit the new criteria for a planet: "a celestial body that is in orbit around the sun, has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a ... nearly round shape, and has cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit."

Pluto doesn't qualify because its orbit is inclined relative to the rest of the solar system and crosses over the orbit of Neptune.

from National Republic:

Pluto Not a Planet, Astronomers Rule

Researchers voted on the definition at a meeting of the International Astronomical Union in Prague, in the Czech Republic. This group decides on the official names of all celestial bodies.

The tough decision comes after a two-year search for a scientific definition of the word "planet." The term never had an official meaning before.

Pluto would be demoted, because it does not dominate its neighborhood. Charon, its large "moon," is about half the size of Pluto and orbits along with it. All the true planets are far larger than their moons. A previous proposal, unveiled last week, defined a planet only as an object large enough to have become rounded due to the force of its own gravity.

That proposal would have kept Pluto as a planet in a subcategory called "plutons." Charon and Xena would also have become plutons. The asteroid Ceres would have become a new planet.

from cnet: Pluto: And then there were eight

"More dwarf planets are expected to be announced by the IAU in the coming months and years," according to the IAU statement. "Currently, a dozen candidate dwarf planets are listed on IAU's dwarf planet watchlist, which keeps changing as new objects are found and the physics of the existing candidates becomes better-known." Varying proposals from IAU members included referring to these smaller terrestrial bodies in different areas of the solar system as "planetoids" and "trans-Neptunian objects." Another proposal referred to the smaller objects as "plutonian objects." Yet another proposed the idea of a hierarchy of "planets," "dwarf planets" and "small solar-system bodies," according to the IAU. Still others wanted to keep Pluto as a planet but come up with alternatives for the other three.

from the IAU: Definition of a Planet in the Solar System

(1) A planet¹ is a celestial body that (a) is in orbit around the Sun, (b) has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape, and (c) has cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit.

(2) A dwarf planet is a celestial body that (a) is in orbit around the Sun, (b) has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape², (c) has not cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit, and (d) is not a satellite.

(3) All other objects³ orbiting the Sun shall be referred to collectively as "Small Solar System Bodies".

1 The eight planets are: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.

2 An IAU process will be established to assign borderline objects into either dwarf planet and other categories.

3 These currently include most of the Solar System asteroids, most Trans-Neptunian Objects (TNOs), comets, and other small bodies.

eye on the sky insert

Eris Be Her Name 09/14/06

Okay, I had to throw this in... I know the scientists who discovered 2003UB213 wanted to name this new (albeit dwarf) planet Xena, you know, to represent a female character (albeit only in television mythology, not in ancient mythology), but the IAU has just decided a name for this distant icy rock which shook up the solar system and possibly caused the redefinition of planetary status: Eris.

“What is Eris?”, you wonder... Well, Eris is the Greek goddess of chaos and strife, which sounds good with us because (a) it’s named after a female goddess, like the discoverers wanted, and (b) Scars Publications’ last collection book was “Chaos theory,” so why not call name rogue dwarf planet after a woman, and bring up chaos, right? Especially when the concept of having new planets from the Kuiper Belt shook up the International Astronomical Union and the concept of our solar system size and the definition of a planet had to be hammered out, it seems beautifully appropriate that this new dwarf planet include the concepts of chaos and strife in the history of it’s name, because the discovery of this larger-than-Pluto planet did bring a little Chaos into the Astronomy world...

There are about 100,000 pieces of “space trash,” objects spinning quickly around the Earth, and some of these pieces are from objects lost in human missions. NASA and the Air Force can only track objects bigger than ~4", which account for less than one tenth of all space debris. As an example, a spatula was lost on one mission, and they’ve tracked it and know it will return to Earth in a fireball in October 2006.

Finding a Puffy Planet

09/15/06

I look for astronomy news all the time, and I’ve read reports when astronomers were first searching for planets in other solar systems, they most often found gas giants with orbits extremely close to the sun (like, planets the size of Jupiter, in orbits closer than Mercury’s orbit). But if we’re talking about defining planets here, I have to share with you the AP news story that astronomers discovered a new planet (called HAT-P-1) that was the largest, and funny enough, the least dense.

In the constellation Lacerta (450 light years from Earth), this planet is a puffed up ball of probably hydrogen and helium, and astronomers have said that it’s so puffy, that compared to anything we know, it would “float.” A research astrophysicist with the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory even said, “This new planet, if you could imagine putting it in a cosmic water glass, would float.”

poetry
the passionate stuff

4 Foot 5 1/2 Inches Tall

Claire Blancett

People have asked me whether or not
I was so small that I just slipped out of my mother.
I tell them “no, I was hatched from an egg”
Just think of the absurdity of it all.

Lying in bed with you
Eyes slowly drooping.
Fingers interlaced, so we can't tell
Whose hand is whose.

You ask me why I am the way I am
“I didn't eat my vegetables as a kid”
I tell you.
You laugh, and roll your eyes.

So, what am I?
Who am I?

I see the world from a different angle
For every one step you take
I take three more.

Do not pat my head,
I lack the four legs and tail to deserve such a gesture.
I don't know how to “lie down” or “play dead”

So, you ask me again
Why am I the way I am.
I curl up into a ball and yawn.
“Because I am, that's why.”



*Vodka Winner, art
by David Matson*

Ode to an Artist

for Christy

Michael Ceraolo

Her first,
and possibly greatest,
medium was herself:

multicolored ribbon in her hair,
small glasses that don't,
that can't,
disguise her beauty,
lavender eyeshadow that lights up her eyes even more,
piercings that should normally detract from her beauty
but definitely don't
If her works other than herself
show even a fraction of this talent,
she's destined for greatness



Dance, art
by Edward
Michael
O'durr
Supranowicz

In twenty years

Jacob Alves

“Why don't you just leave her alone,
she's with her new boyfriend,” Gilbert says.
“Some fucking home town loser is trying to
tell me what to do,” says Jake.
“We'll see where you're at in twenty years.”
“In twenty years I'll be dead of an over dose
in some dirty motel room while some cheap under weight prostitute
pulls the wallet from my back pocket.”

DEAD MAN WALKING AT NIGHT

Luis Cuanhtemoc Berriozabal

At my feet lay a map of the sea,
just a small bit of it.
I kicked it away
into the rain, which fell
from a bizarre part of the heavens.

My skull wept from the hollow
part of my head, where there
were no eyes. I was a dead man
walking without hope
and no place to sleep.

It was night.
There was no daylight in this place.

I searched for the map of the sea.
I bent to find my eyes
filled with tears, blood, or rain.
They felt like small smooth stones.

When I popped my eyes back in
I was right. It was night.



Joshua Stewart Jr., art
by Cheryl Townsend

Ronaldinho by Michael Swanson

how is it that a dog,
sleeping sounder than any antiseptic adult

can snap so sudden to action-
for an angry ass-licking,
out of as I've said deepest slumber

an explosion;
a fire flash
of muscular motion

& back as quickly
to joint-healing sleep

only snorting or kicking sporadically

you would think an ass-lick
would be more of a slow build-
like The Beautiful Game

but my dog is no Ronaldinho



Metropolitan Dog Day, painting by Jay Marvin
www.jaymarvinonline.com

We die – They do nothing!¹

Alex Dimitrov

In the movies and on television,
all our papers, publications, fit to screen along
our pulp porn dinners.
They said –
the whole world is watching.

We didn't bother showing up.

The truth our father knew – the son,
his body stone hard, stood up,
strung facing the dawn like a puppet
only streaks where tears have washed away the blood.

Like apparitions taunting us
and stabbing at the wound,
they have gone out, sung, and held themselves.

Only a pastor was missing.

Three blocks down
the homo cheer squad wasn't hung enough
to hear their victims actualized.

How fast can you run in those heels honey?

How hard, how holy will you be when
he muscles you into a corner
fucks you, fucks your girlfriend
and his fantasy of dicking dykes
will be yours to live out, ours to live and let live.

Silence no longer equals death.²



TV Head, art by
Mike Hovancsek

New,
art by
Rose
E.
Grier



Silent Prayer

Valorie Mall

A single drop of blood
fell in mute, scarlet misery.

The man on his knees
Looked up silently pleading.

His questioning brown eyes,
Searching for mercy in another.

The butt of a rifle
Cracks in the silence again.

Horrid crunch of bone
Filling the morning air.

The man on his knees
Falls silently to the ground.

Now drops of crimson pattering down,
Filling the space where once was one.

The man on his knees
Raises hands in supplication

His innocent, bruised face,
Raises hopefully to his captors.

Praying for a merciful end to the agony,
While he knows there will be more.

My Pretty, Pretty Makeover

Nathan Jeffries

Each evening my girlfriend
begs to pretty me up, lose
the chipped, plastic glasses
and matted brown carpeting

And I let her.

Red lipstick, gold curls
and six inch heels:
the whole works.

Sometimes (when we feel
adventurous) I even toss
on some breast implants,
nipples so firm they
would choke an infant.

Then blush, green contacts
and tongue piercings, always
followed by a heavy black circle
like a fist about the left eye

Because if I am going to be a
whore I want to look the part.

prose
the meat and potatoes stuff

WITNESS

Mel Waldman

She witnessed a murder. When she got out of the elevator, she saw him shoot the fifteen-year-old girl once in the face, blowing a huge hole in her skull, almost decapitating her. The girl was gone before she hit the lobby floor.

He looked down at the corpse and then turned toward the familiar witness. “Hello,” he said, smiling sardonically. With the slick gun hanging loosely in his right hand, he pointed his left forefinger at her and said: “Bang! Bang!” He laughed uproariously. Then he strutted off, leaving her behind, standing erect like a marble statue, perhaps in shock, in a private secret place, trying to understand, but never quite fathoming the violence she had witnessed, nor why she was still alive.

The victim had been a neighbor. And the killer was her ex-boyfriend who wouldn’t let her go. He knew where the witness, who had just turned eighteen, lived and worked. She was marked for death. But first, he’d terrorize her.

Later, the police arrived. Detached, she reported what had happened in less than a minute. The next day, she spent time at the police station and gave a complete report. But she left out her emotional terror and shock. She was offered police protection. She accepted it. Yet she knew he’d get to her. She knew.

She worked at the medical center on Burnside Avenue in the southwest Bronx. For a few weeks, she transferred to the Walton Avenue site and entered therapy with me. Therapy’s usually a slow process. And she had suffered from an acute stress reaction possibly leading to PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder). Still, she seemed to respond to therapy.

He did not show up at the Burnside or Walton Avenue site. Perhaps, the streets had swallowed him up. Maybe he had left the Bronx or New York. The police continued to watch her apartment building and the medical center. Nothing happened. Then she vanished too. The police never found her, nor him.

I see her face and hear her voice every day. Her name is Anna. Five years have passed, but she's embedded in my brain. And I must confess, she's in my soul too (if it exists).

I see her beautiful face-dark brown eyes, full lips, and long jet black hair. Even in terror, she sometimes smiled. When she felt hopeful, in a poignant moment, she grew a big, wide smile that filled me up with faith.

Although I see her face of terror too and her trembling body and voice, sometimes I hear her voice of innocence, as soft and lovely as a peacock's feather.

I suppose it's a false innocence. I mean, she witnessed and experienced hell. Then she came to me for help. We had only a few sessions. I hope I helped her in some small way.

She touched me with her courage and allowed me to feel her pain. In fact, she passed it on to me. Emotional pain is contagious, you see.

The killer vanished and so did my patient. But Anna left me a gift-the joy of knowing her.

She's inside me and I'm inside the belly of the beast, which swallowed me five years ago in the southwest Bronx. It's dark in here. Very dark.



*California's Continuing Cultural
Conquest, at by Aaron Wilder*

The Tells

Pat Dixon

I'm not the kind of person that likes to brag, unlike fifty of my colleagues and my immediate supervisor, who shall remain nameless, but I am the best at what I do.

When I'm off the job and just hanging out with my buddies or driving my wife around, people tend to pigeonhole me as an icky-picky hyper-critical sonuvabitch, especially where other people's cars are concerned. In fact, until I got this job in security last year, ninety-five percent of the people who knew me would mock me in some way or other—and the other five percent would silently roll their eyes.

Security at the tunnels and bridges around Baltimore! You've probably wondered how we do it. How do we keep some suicide bomber from driving a car or truck loaded with explosives into or onto the structure and just ka-blooie-ing the damn thing to kingdom come? How do we keep the 4.7 million vehicles moving smoothly—well, moving at all—into and out of and around this great metropolis without putting these vital arterial structures at risk?

You have to know that we can't do it by stopping every vehicle and searching it or even taking a few seconds to eyeball the I.D. of the drivers. That would cause way way way too many thousands of hours of delays—and it would require far too many more Monitors than the taxpayers of this great state of Maryland or anywhere else can afford to train and pay.

The secret—is D.P.—Driver Profiling—the cutting-edge science that has rewritten the books on Homeland Security. Between the knowledge gained in the city's 45-hour course of training, in which I scored in the top half of my graduating class, and my own innate, natural, inborn, God-given abilities, I have personally been able to keep Baltimore's bridges and tunnels safe from the threats posed by at least four bombers in just the past two months.

Not to brag, but my most famous coup was to have a huge shiny black Mercedes SUV pulled over fully two and a quarter miles before it entered a tunnel. At my own insistence, the occupants were detained and questioned while their vehicle was thoroughly searched by man and beast. One and a half hours later, nothing had been found. They, the occupants—two men and two women—all had what appeared to be valid I.D. as well as sundry

and assorted papers that purported to make them out to be Staten Island residents on vacation, headed towards D.C., with confirmed hotel room reservations waiting for them. All kinds of colorful flyers and brochures about the Smithsonian Institution and a large array of hoity-toity cultural events like concerts and plays were marked up in pen with words like “Sounds great!” and “This is a must-see!” And their hotsy-totsy leather luggage had designer sports clothes and fancy-schmancy evening-wear, including strapless gowns and white bowties and the like.

Of course I know better than to be impressed with surface crud like that—or even by threats that they will sue or call their congressman. My supervisor nervously told me he was in favor of apologizing and putting them back on the road. He only gave me that “courtesy” because I had been right in 97.4% of the other cases I’ve been involved in, both before and after he came aboard with the Agency. And I told him I was coming down from the Monitor Room, the M.R. as we like to call it, and eyeball them and their vehicle in person before he did so. It’s S.O.P. for us Vehicle Monitors to have this right, and so he said for me to please try and get there on the double.

I eyeballed them for three minutes through the one-way glass. All of them were well dressed in expensive casual clothes and were talking in a ritzy-schlitzky way to each other and the three nervous Agency reps who were with them in the Driver Detainment Room, a.k.a. the D.D.R.

I glanced over their suitcases and handbags and papers for another two minutes and was negatively impressed by their expensive designer sunglasses and designer underwear and so on, so forth, and etcetera.

Their vehicle, I immediately has surmised, would be the make it or break it item, so I took the express ‘vator down to the Search Garage two floors below street level. Whatever could be pulled apart or probed without cutting it had apparently been pulled apart, probed, and inspected from every angle. I walked twice around those dirty bastards’ shiny black SUV and petted one of the Sniff K-9s that followed me. Then I beckoned one of the Search Team Personnel over and whispered a couple words in his ear. He shook his head. I jerked my thumb towards the Mercedes and said softly, but with total authority and confidence: “Do it.”

Those bastards—may they all rot in hell—are now behind bars because of my acumen and nigh-infallibly honed American instincts. And thus one more avenue of attack was closed off to the enemy—thanks exclusively and totally to me.

All the Search Team had to do was remove their massive tires from their mag wheels, including of course their spare, and check the wheel itself. Any

semi-smart Drug Dick on the Tex-Mex boarder would have known enough to look there—for drugs—but, as my supervisor said when I was awarded my fifth Citation of Excellence, “Who’d ‘a’ thunk to look on a Mercedes’ mags for ‘splosives? Only Marvin Walsh had the insight, the instincts, the vision, the intuition, the acumen to do so! God bless America!”

They had shrink-wrapped five packages of plastique explosive C97 inside eight layers of air-tight coating and had slathered each layer with turpentine to cut down any residual odors the K-9s might pick up—and THEN had buried the packages in mud on the Jersey side of the lower Hudson River for two months. Those dirty rotten bastards actually bragged about their modus operandi during interrogation after they learned that it had actually worked for them—even to the extent that when I pushed each dog’s nose up to the packages that were crazy-glued on the insides of the mags, not one mutt had a clue that this was what they’d been trained to locate.

Since I knew already before I went into the Search Garage that I was correct—that these creeps had to be hiding something someplace—it was merely a matter of finding out what the Search Team had done and then going one giant step beyond that to the correct answer.

Now, boys and girls, I’ve been temporarily been reassigned to help orient you new trainees and upgrade the others Vehicle Monitors in my unit. I even get to wear this shiny Instructor badge at this training course, which is now a mandatory 48-hours long. And, for this work I get time-and-a-half!

In my three fifty-minute blocks of instruction, I will be showing video clips of various vehicles I’ve been involved with and’ll be asking you, “What’s wrong with this picture?”

Invariably, nobody can see it without prompting from me, even if I just creep through the video one frame at a time and point my little red laser at different parts of the screen.

The case I’d be proudest of—if I was a boastful sort of person—is that one with the four rich yuppy-looking suicide-bombing bastards in that black Mercedes SUV. All my—uh—students in my previous classes all found it difficult to believe that they actually had a normal-looking tattered U.S. flag flying from a little plastic mast on the passenger’s side and two standard decals with Old Glory and “God Bless America” displayed on their rear window. That, to them, is the height of deviosity! I just kind of chuckle every time and say, “Elementary, my dear students.”

So, how did those godless atheistic foreign perverts with their perfect English and perfect flags and perfect luggage and brochures slip up? How did I spot them on my high-res monitor before they were within four miles of

the tunnel and know to have them pulled over, them out of the thousands of vehicles that were queued up to enter that vulnerably endangered structure? Also elementary—if you, like me, ever have watched and studied how U.S. citizens, especially with New York plates, actually drive!

Tell number one—22.7 percent of the vehicles from New York have got drivers yapping into a phone, and for drivers in the ritziest vehicles the percentage is at least triple that. But nobody in that vehicle—not one of ‘em—was using a hand-held cellular phone. This alone constitutes suspicious behavior in my mind when I first spot ‘em on my high-res monitor. And it later turned out that they’d planned to “phone” their mags while inside the tunnel to detonate all that C97 plastique.

And for another thing—tell number two—those people stayed totally inside their own lane. Virtually nobody from New York ever does that, and no New Yorker with an SUV can resist straddling the left-hand lane divider even when he—or she—isn’t compulsively leaping back and forth, back and forth, one lane to another. This really sent up a major flag for me to keep my eye on ‘em.

But tell numero three was the last-straw final give-away. Their driver did behave normally by letting a few other cars cut in ahead of them—real native New Yorkers will alternate between aggressive meanness and hyper-politeness in any two-minute period—but it was the red stoplights along that stretch of the approach that spelled their doom and downfall. Along that stretch—hand activated by me—there are three red lights in front of them—and they stopped for each one! In fact they were braking when each light was only yellow! No real New Yorker ever would do that! And it wasn’t because he’s scared of detonating their explosives prematurely ahead of time. Not at all. So, seeing that bizarre behavior, I knew just like the Hungarian language-coach guy in *My Fair Lady* that there’s majorly something totally unkosher about these people! “Their driving is too good,” I said! It was way way way too damn good for ‘em to be real New Yorkers—or even real Americans—except for maybe some of those rare weirdos that come down here from western Massachusetts and totally stop dead for anybody that’s even thinking about stepping into a crosswalk.

So I knew they had to be damn foreigners—and up to no damn good. Now that’s what we call expert profiling! Of course, this insight now being a crypto-classified state secret, if any of you flunk this course and don’t become Certified Maryland Vehicle Monitors yourselves, I’ll just have to tell the Agency to—wink, wink—kill you.

From Then to Now

Damion Hamilton

“Now are you really going Tony—don’t have me waiting, If you are not going—I know how you are.”

“Yeah, I’m really going.”

“Whenever I go over there all he ever talks about is seeing you—it would mean so much to him if he saw you. You all used to be best friends; I don’t know what happened?

“Oh, people change—that’s all. You know how that is. Do you still have the same friends now that you had when you were a kid?

“Well, no but... it was different with you guys—I mean you were so close. You guys were always running around with each other and playing and wrestling and you used to always spend the weekend over his parents house, and he used to come over here.”

“Yeah, I know Annie, that’s why I find it hard to believe, that he spent all that time in jail. When you are a little kid—who ever thinks that they will end up in jail someday. And all the stories you guys tell me about him shooting this person, and robbing that person, and being hooked on dope. He just sounds so different now; I don’t know if I’ll be able to recognize him. I don’t know—you’ve seen him. Does he seem any different?”

“Well, he still looks the same.”

“I’m not talking about that. I’m talking about....”

“You’ll have to see for yourself. That’s why you going ain cha?”

“Yeah”

“Don’t worry about it—everything will be fine. He’s not bitter or anything about being in jail, if that’s what you’re worrying about. Well, I got to go to work, before I’m late. Drive home after work, and I’ll pick you up, and we’ll go there together. You’ll be glad you went. Now I’ve got to go—see you later.”

Tony hung up the phone. He couldn’t believe that he was going to go through with this. His sister just started talking so fast, with a pleasant voice, and all of the sudden he had agreed to do something that really did not want to do. Or maybe he did want to see his friend, which is why he agreed. His sister had asked him plenty of times previously, but he always said no. Let the past be left in the past. Why couldn’t people let their past go? Why was there a need to go back and dig things up? After all, it had been over ten years since he had last seen his friend, and lately he had been thinking about his old friend a lot. Would he still sound the same, look the same, walk in the same manner, and who

knows if he would ever get this chance again.

Sweet memories of childhood forced themselves upon him, and he remembered playing laughing talking wrestling and just doing nothing with his friends for hours; so many of his days were spent like this, and when one is very young, one thinks these sort of days will last forever. But aw, they go away within a couple of years, and one finds new friends and new interests; and these things seem just as interesting and exciting as the old interests and things. And this is what happened with Tony and Myron.

After being friends through most of their childhood—Tony began thinking about his future, which was so near to him at the time, and he withdrew into himself around the age of sixteen. He had so many dreams: he wanted to be a boxer, a professional wrestler, or a movie star—something thrilling and glamorous. So he began working towards his goal, by training and lifting weights for hours upon the day. He lost track of all his friends including Myron, and his grades suffered from his obsession, but he kept an eye on his friend.

Meanwhile Myron, who was a couple of years younger, than he was, began to discover new old friends while he was beginning high school, and these newer friends were a haven for some of the more darker passions of youth. While he was with his new set of friends he discovered sex, drugs, brawling, and the narcotic like euphoria that comes along with these vices. With drugs he was able to obtain money, and with money came pretty girls, and with money and women came street fame, and with this sort of fame comes jealousy, which leads to fights and shootings. So he joined a street gang, and they protected him. He had been in and out of jail for drug dealing and shootings. And after awhile, he began using the drugs more than he was selling them, his appearance began to suffer, and he began to sink into ennui and despair. He began brooding over the choices he made in life, and also his friends from childhood—all he thought were doing better in life than he; even though he did not know this, he sunk deeper into despair ennui, and drug use. When the cost of his habit escalated he began robbing gas stations, and got caught one night serving time in prison for a couple of years. And now he was out, and he became sentimental about some of his old childhood friends, and Tony was one of the ones he was curious about.

All day long, at work Tony kept thinking about the meeting, he was supposed to have with his former friend that night. And he still wasn't quite sure if he wanted to go through with it—he could always cancel at the last minute, like he did so many other times with other things. Perhaps his friend hadn't changed at all, and he was still the warm-hearted, fun, charming kid he remembered him to be. He was always so extroverted, all the people in the neighborhood seemed to love him: old women, young women, old men, babies, cats and dogs. They all seemed to love him. What a lovely smile he had—my how Tony

envied that smile. No one expected him to be robbing and shooting people and doing drugs when he grew up. Tony was in a daze for most of the day, and some of the workers began watching him, and asked him was he okay, and he said yes. There was no way to tell anyone all the thoughts and feelings that were flowing through him; he just wished the workday would move slower. He wanted to ponder all the possible outcomes of this meeting he was dreading so much.

He came home later that day, his sister was already waiting for him, and he didn't really want to see her so soon. He was tired, sore and dazed from work that he just wanted to convalesce in a room alone. But she greeted him with a smile—which suggested that everything was going to be all right, and informed him that she wanted to get there early, so that they could leave early. It was a weeknight after all, and everyone had to get up and go to work in the morning, including Myron, who had found a job in a bottle factory, since he had been out of jail.

The commute did not take very long, Myron's parents house was only about ten minutes away on the highway, and it took about fifteen minutes to get from their house to the interstate; while Annie played the radio the whole time and even began to dance and sing to the music. She was in a very good mood, while Tony just looked out of the window and brooded over the upcoming scene. A few times he wanted to ask her to turn back around, and make up an excuse for not being able to make it. But he would look at his sister, and notice how content and ebullient she was, and this would set him at ease slightly. She had the windows from the car rolled half way down, so that the wind was blowing in his face and through his hair, and the sound of the engine and the other engines from the other cars, and the sound of tires rolling along the road, almost lulled him to sleep. But when they hit the exit ramp off the highway, this was when he started to feel anxious again. Even though, he had ridden down this exit ramp hundreds of times before, though he hadn't ridden down it recently. His dad used to give him rides down there, to see his friend. And how anxious, yet happy he used to feel in those bygone days of childhood. How different he felt, this day. He breathed the ominous air through his nostrils, and felt the ominous air move through his lungs.

When they arrived at the house, Myron's mother was there— she was a very kind and gregarious woman, who was always smiling. He was happy to see her, because she made him feel as if she was his mother, and if she had anything to eat in the house she would always offer it without reluctance. She gave him a very lively hug, and while she was hugging him, he looked around to see if he could see Myron—but he didn't see him. She noticed him looking around, and told him Myron was in the basement. Tony had wondered how he would be received by Ms. Anderson, considering that he hadn't heard or spoken to her over ten years. And after all the things that had happened to Myron, he wondered if he thought he had abandoned him, and

thus was at least partially responsible perhaps, for some of things that had happened to him. But on the surface level he could not tell if she was harboring any malevolent feelings towards him, with her nature, it was very difficult to tell. She belonged to a type that could conceal just about anything with a bright smile and a laugh. He had noticed this when he was a little kid, when she used to take the boys places. She would suffer people even if she did not like them very much, bring out that beaming smile, and a laugh, and with that charm she would welcome a person with welcome arms; and then when that person left, it was, “oh, I can not stand ms. Such and such, she such a phony.” So with her nature it was very hard to tell.

She asked him about the usual stuff: jobs, girls, how tall he had gotten and schools. He had to inform her that he was not in school any longer... that it didn't work out. Then there was a brief pause, and she and Annie began talking about clothes, jewelry, Annie's plans with her boyfriend, television and the latest gossip in the neighborhood. He began to feel terribly bored listening to her speak, or if he watched the images on television, he felt his eyes start to close and he felt himself going to sleep. Ms. Anderson noticed this, and figured that he was probably anxious to see Myron, which was not the case— he was hoping to hold off seeing him. But she called him up, from the basement, after she called him three times, he answered, and they heard his feet pounding against the wooden staircase. Then the door opened and he saw his friend.

Tony glanced at him with a smile on his face, and all the while, he was hoping his smile looked genuine, and not feigned. But he was analyzing his friend, not really knowing if he should smile or look very grave. His friend hadn't changed very much; he still looked very young. The young men made eye contact, and he noticed Myron was smiling through his mouth, but the expression in his eyes seemed quite serious. They hugged and Tony told him how happy he was to finally see him. Then they started talking about each other's appearance and about how they changed during the years. They were able to keep the conversation going like this for a few minutes—Very light. Myron seemed to be in a good mood, but Tony was rather uneasy. He didn't really know what to say to him: he wanted to ask him about his prison time, and to see what that experience was like; but figured that they would eventually get to that subject. But for now, he had to be patient. Ms. Anderson helped him out, and made sure the conversation stayed light: hairstyles, clothing, girls, television, food, and the weather, what was playing in the movie theatres. She was the type of person, who could make the inconsequential seem very interesting. At this moment, he loved Ms. Anderson very much, and as the evening moved along, he began to think about his friend being in prison less and more about being in the prescience of his old friend, who was still charming as he was during childhood, but one thing bothered Tony: it seemed as if his innocence or naivete had been lost, and the natural good

natured had been contrived. Myron was doing his best to flatter Annie. He always admitted to Tony that he had a crush on his sister; but while it seemed cute while they were children, it took on a disturbing aspect now that they were adults, and knowing what Myron had been through.

They sat down and watched television and talked and laughed for some time. Then Annie suggested that they should order a pizza, and everyone thought that was a good idea, because there wasn't any food in the house. And one couldn't have a party without food, so they waited for that to arrive, then people began to run out of things to say. So the room was very quiet, and everyone stared at the television screen, without saying very much to each other. During those moments, there was a tense and anxious ambiance in the room. Everyone began staring at each other, when they presumed the others person was not looking. It was assumed that everyone was just waiting for the pizza to arrive, but it was really something else everybody was waiting for.

Myron suggested that they play cards and to stir everyone up. Everyone except Tony thought this was a good idea—he didn't know how to play cards, but he figured if it was what everyone wanted to do—then he must comply. He told everyone that he did not know how to play cards, so Myron offered to teach him. He had become quite a good card player while incarcerated, and he was eager to teach his old friend. Tony wasn't so eager to learn, though—how could people play cards for hours, it seemed so boring to him? But he figured he'd smile and let Myron show him how the game went. Myron went on giving him the instructions to the game, and showing what each character represented and how powerful they were on the card. He was speaking rather quickly, so Tony had a difficult time following everything that was being said. He was thinking how awful it must have been for him serving time in prison and doing stuff like: playing cards and lifting weights or working for days and weeks, and not being able to leave one's surroundings—just being trapped there. How awful it seemed to him. He had a hard time concentrating on the game, so he made mistake after mistake, and whenever he made one, everyone began laughing; he hated playing the role of a clown. Myron had to show him how to hold his cards, to get a better grip on the cards, and not let his opponents get a glance of his hand. Tony tried and tried, but he couldn't get his grip right; and he made mistake after mistake, and everybody at the table was laughing at him. He felt like a child, or an idiot or something at the table with a bunch of adults. And he looked across the table, and saw his sister, who was laughing the hardest at him, and he wanted to slap her or hide under the table—away from everyone's smiling and laughing face. He was glad that everyone was laughing though, it made everyone stay in the moment; but it was everyone against him, so he felt like quitting and walking out the door. It had been a long day at work, so he was tired and dazed, and couldn't really focus on what was going on with the card

game. He looked across the table at his sister, whom he really loathed at the moment, as if to say he knew things would not go very well—and after all, she was laughing at him the hardest. But after a moment, the laughter subsided, and Myron began asking him questions about himself and began answering them. He told him working at a library full time, and when he wasn't doing this, he was reading books or writing movie scripts or plays. His sister told him that he was always reading books, and that he was a real, "bookworm" then everyone began laughing again, and Myron said, "you must have read every book in the library." Then everyone laughed harder, the Tony began to feel really uncomfortable, because he was the only one in the room who read literature, and people who didn't read themselves, tended to resent that. Then Ms. Anderson asked him did he read Stephen King or Tom Clancy, and this seemed like a joke to him, only she was in earnest. So he said that he read them, "every once in a while," but the truth was he loathed these popular novelists, and couldn't understand why people read such things. But he didn't want to say this, in order not to appear "snobbish."

Then Myron remarked that while he was in prison he had read every book that he could get his hands on. "Big thick, books," he said to impress his friend. But Tony didn't believe this, because if he read a great deal that it wouldn't have mattered whether the book was thin or fat, some greatest books ever written have been thin books. And wouldn't name any of the books he had read or any of the authors. In this he recognized something of the old street hustler in his friend, and this alarmed him.

Tony couldn't get a hold of the game, so Myron became frustrated and told him he could just watch them play and he was glad about that. He could just daydream and not worry about what was going on, and just let time pass. The women began to talk to each other more about their children, relationships, women stuff, etc. Myron began to grow bored because he was winning all the hands, and didn't really have any competition. And the incessant chattering of the women were beginning to annoy him. Tony felt sentimental, he remember all the times they used to go out on the back porch, when they were kids, just to be alone and to talk, and get away from the adults. And they were free to talk about anything they wanted to talk about, without the watchful eye of a guardian. It was strange moment, were he felt that he was a kid again, and all the things that had happened in their young lives didn't really happen: they didn't go through puberty, they didn't try drugs, they were ever women, and Myron didn't go to jail. It seemed that way... for a moment

It was a crisp autumn night, and one could see the full moon shining low in the sky, it didn't seem so far away, dogs were barking in intervals, one heard the neighborhood kids yelling from blocks away. Everything seemed the same as twelve years ago. Tony kept looking, studying his friend.

“See I’m the same person I am, when were kids. I haven’t changed at all,” Myron said.

“I know you still looked the same.”

“Say, why haven’t you been over in such a long time.”

“I don’t know man, I just got caught up in going school and working, I wished I hadda come you to see you all more often.”

“That’s go okay man, say what are you studying in college.”

“I’m studying Criminal Justice.”

“Aw man, you’re going to be a cop.”

“Nah, probably not, I was just studying it because, I didn’t know what else to do. It seemed pretty interesting. But I don’t want to be cop; cops have to defend laws they know very little about. And I don’t agree with a lot of laws. By taking those classes you learn how wicked the system is. I can’t defend that. I don’t really know what I want to do now.”

“Yeah, believe me, I know how wicked the system can be.”

“I know what have you been up to— I’ve heard things.”

“Nothing much, I just been getting caught up in a lot of stuff. It started with high school and getting into fights with people, and getting kick out of school. Then selling drugs and one thing leads to another and you end up in jail, or on drugs.

“A lot of people find that sort of life exciting.”

“Yeah, its exciting making money and buying new clothes and cars. I bought so many cars when I was selling, you used to wreck cars and get new ones. Used to run from the cops—they were always after you, and they know you sell drugs. We used to go to clubs and buy the bar out and drink all night, and then leave with prettiest girls.”

“Wow, sounds way more exciting then my life.”

“Yeah, but it’s not. I’ve wished I had done what you did. I just got caught in the streets. You know, I didn’t have to get into this life. I had a family and a roof over my head; I didn’t grow up hard. I just got into the street life for excitement. Now, I think that I have had too much excitement... you get caught up in things.

“Like what?”

“Drugs?”

“Drugs—I didn’t know you used them, I thought you were just selling them.”

“Well, you guys were not around, my friends, and I wasn’t in school or working or anything. I just had a lot time to do nothing. And than I got hooked on them. We always made fun of drug addicts when were kids—I didn’t think I would become one. Life is so unpredictable. But I’m trying to stay off that stuff—it’s hard though. But I was able to kick heroin while I was in jail.”

“How did you end up in jail?”

“Somebody snitched on me—the first time I went in, it was for a mur-

der— something I had to do, for my boys.”

“Murder?”

A look of horror spread along the plains of Tony’s face. The features of his friend’s face seemed a lot harder to him now.

“Yeah, but you know, I’m not a bad person, or animal or nothing. You know that—I ain’t no serial killer or nothing. It’s just something you gotta do for your boys—your gang. Me—I’ve never really been into gangbanging, I just been into making money on the streets. I did a little bit of gangbanging in high school— we used to get into fights with our enemies and used to just punch them out until our hands bled. Look at this.”

He showed Tony the calluses on his knuckles, which scared and enlarged.

“That comes from all the fights I used go get in to. I remember I stomped this kid so bad, he was bleeding all over floor. One time, I hit this kid with a baseball bat and knocked him out, I was so mad.”

Tony looked over at his friend and couldn’t believe how nonchalant he was being as he relayed these things to him. His friend, he seemed older now, than he had noticed earlier in the night. The eyes seemed dimmer, yet more fierce, he spoke in the jerky rhythms of a street hustler. As he listened to him, he noticed that the “child thing” had just about vanished from his friend. All the wonder and curiosity about the world, such as geniuses and children have, had left him. He was a street hustler now, and lived his life according to the circumstances, which presented themselves upon him. He became bored listening to his friend talking about his experiences. There was a huge gulf between them now, and it was more spiritual than physical. He had high hopes when they first went outside, he had expected to get back some of past from childhood. But he had failed. What was lost could not be recovered again. I suppose, Thomas Wolfe was right when he said, “you can’t go home again.” And Tony suffered this bitterly.

His sister came out, and told them they would be leaving soon, because she had to get up and go to work in the morning. And Tony was relieved, because he felt as if he was in the presence of a stranger now, a phantom now, which resembled a beloved personality from his past. They exchanged numbers, and told each other that they would keep in touch. But neither one of them meant it, it was just something who had to say to people who you were once affectionate to.

The walk from the porch to the car was strange, because he remembered when he as a young boy, how he used to always hate leaving his friend, and wished they were brothers and lived together. Now, he just wanted to get in the car. He felt very sad, but he was glad he came to see him, and to cherish, and to bury something precious from the past. Something that could not be had again.

part six (the October 2006 installment) of

THE DRIVE

Kenneth DiMaggio

That was one way to look at it. Now that we came to what seemed like the rear of the hospital, we might discover another source of its fuel; along with finding some medical waste—and was medical waste part of its fuel? In order to find it, we still had to cross a landscape that seemed more like a petrified battlefield. First, we were stopped by pockets of small valleys; that seem to have been pock marked with artillery fire. At the back of the tower, most of it was ripped away; what seemed to be the result of a bombing raid. The tower's upper stories had only concrete and wires for floors. As I looked away from the ruined tower, I thought I saw a similar ruin a half mile away. No, not a tower, but giant, twisted steel and concrete pillars. They seemed like supports for an elevated highway. If so, the highway never went beyond its skeletal foundation. Whatever its intended design, this abandoned industrial project now looked like the bones of extra terrestrial dinosaurs—or the legs of invading space pods in H.G. Wells' novel, "The War of the Worlds." (Well, at least that's what they looked like in the movie version. But I am going to read the book.) To get to the closest killer pod would mean negotiating yards and yards of a frozen shell hole like earth—I don't know.

"Fuck it," said The Young Artist. "I say we skip the twisted chess pieces and try what's left of the hospital."

"Chess pieces, ha?" I said. "But there's no King—Queen—Bish—they're all just fractured pawns."

"And no one big enough to play with them. Come on."

Back to exactly where? The inside of this shell that had once been a hospital, seemed filled with dust, metal shavings, corroded steel; whatever it was, it made me start coughing. What had once been a hospital, was now a large train station where there is a big flimsy canopy overhead so that fresh air comes at you from two or more sides, only here the air was dirty and bitter tasting, as if it had been flavored with turpentine that had been sitting at a bottom of a can for about ten years—pah! As I tried to spit! Which only made me feel like I licked my tongue against a puff of tiny metal particles or shavings.

Further entrance was hindered by ripped out hunks of the building itself: twisted steel, concrete, fallen piping, along with bent, crushed or gnarled, hospital furnishings. I couldn't go any further; allergic reaction aside, not to mention that I was a little scared. How embarrassing when The Young Artist just walked right in and quickly negotiated any hunk of debris or tetanus piece of shrapnel

with ease. After seeing her do it, I had to follow, even if it meant covering my mouth and nearly stumbling after every other step. It was not a matter of being a man here—there were still some things men could do, like sleep in the back of a ten year old car and be ready to give everybody who was broke, bitter, bummed out, or bombed out, a ride to wherever their next destination was. No, what got me to follow, was the courage of a young artist; for this was where the fresh voices and visionaries now went: into the abyss and in the hope of finding some poison or waste because so much of the life that was between the pages of *The New Yorker* magazine and the pale white aspirin walls of the suburban shopping malls was one big deep freeze or the pale gray burned out light bulb of death. Excuse us for not exploring the unknown in some grant funded art project that will let philistines pretend they are anarchists. Only in the wreckage, and especially the wreckage of what was once the bright, hopeful, past, might there be some soil, clay, imagery, and perspective from which to create—

Might there?

Such possibility seemed temporarily suspended with the rusted, mangled, metal crib that was now in our path.

But it was a “hospital” crib. There were still flecks of pale white on the bars; paint that had been chipped off by...”

How many generations of toddlers spent their first or maybe their last days in this crib? That seemed so much like the extension of this institution—the same way the hospital gurneys, wheelchairs, and invalids beds did. So even the children themselves probably began to feel like they like needed to be contained, observed, controlled. Well, if I did not want to say healed—it was better than what I had to say instead: defeated. Because that is how everything ended in this hospital; even the hospital itself, as *The Young Artist* noted.

But the hospital was not enough.

Disease and death needed to have this steel crib.

We slowly walked up to it; afraid we might disturb the sickly infant sleeping within? Ah, that infant had not slept here for a long time. What lay here instead: plaster-like chunks, a brick, an empty dried out beer bottle. Buried in this sediment, a decaying plastic pale blue bag that for a moment, looked like it might have been part of the infant’s pajamas or gown. I stepped back.

“What’s wrong?” *The Young Artist* asked.

“I don’t know,” I tried to explain. “For a moment that blue piece of plastic –I thought might be a dress—and then I started thinking that there was a baby there.”

The Young Artist turned away. She touched the top flat bar, then ran her finger across one side of the crib, and softly said:

“It seems like an awful place for a baby to still be.”

The more I stood before this mangled up piece of innocence, the more I began to see it as a skeleton of a small coffin. How much longer before I saw a pair of small ghostly hands grab the flat bar of the crib? Small, ghostly, gray eyes, looking out over it; arms that wanted arms that were still flesh and blood to pick them up?

I quickly turned away.

“I can’t stay here anymore,” I said.

She softly laughed, but there was sympathy in her laugh.

“You’re not afraid, are you?” she asked. There was no cruel or humiliating intent in her question.

“Yeah...” I said, turning around. But more angry, and sad... “To be born into this place only to die in it a few days or weeks later...”

“Relax...” she firmly said. “You’re the anarchist. Shouldn’t you be glad to see an institution in ruins?”

“Yeah, but while it functioned, the arrogance.”

“It wasn’t always arrogance. Maybe there was also some good.”

“Naw, it was arrogance. Come on.”

“You’re afraid,” she said, “and it’s okay to be...”

Naw, it’s—arrogance, I wanted to say, but instead, I just started crying. I just—fuck! Oh, not that much. And nothing an artistic sensitive guy like me should feel bad about—hell, she even smiled, as if she thought it was sweet. But I was still a “guy” and she was not my sweetheart for her to see me like this (or something stupid like that). But it was more than just male vanity that got me to stop crying. It was an anger I now felt for this damn place. This hospital had a more complicit if not direct hand in the death or isolation of the infants in this crib. Why? Because this hospital was also an institution, with a capital I: which may not seem like a very good reason to get upset, and now pick up a hunk of concrete or rubble. But fuck, I was an anarchist and I just hated institutions and in any book that I write they are responsible for any damage or destruction caused to the human spirit, so there!

“Hey!” the Young Artist cried out as I winged the rock high above my head and into the emptied out guts of this hospital.

A moment after I did, there was muffled, “Ka-chunk, ka-chunk!” from the rock after it landed.

Good. I hit something. Even if it was only a shell. Maybe next time I would have enough courage to take a shot when there was a window. Better yet, the office of a place that some insect-like creature of authority issued seemingly harmless sounding memos—memos cutting the financial aid of a college student getting no support.

“Should I—um—be scared of you?” The Young Artist said. I was glad to see

that she was more angry than sad, for I was embarrassed. Not about the crying. That was nothing; it was long overdue for everybody. A little crying for losses and tragedies that are not just personal, could maybe help us understand people who are in a terrible situation.

But suddenly getting nutty by picking up and throwing a rock? Well, that could be healthy too, just let the person you are with, know what you are about to do.

“I’m sorry, I just felt pissed at this great big—you knowit’s great and big and it can do everything, just like God.”

“Yeah, well, let me know when you are able to hit God in the face with a rock.”

“Yeah, well...I’m gonna try...” I said back.

“You’re still taking me to that church that looks like Notre Dame,” she warned. “And you’re not throwing any rock at it!”

“Don’t worry,” I reassured her. “I like that church. That’s where Quasimodo lived. He was like an anarchist you know.”

“I know. I saw the cartoon,” she said. “But did you see this?”

She went up to the crib. On the front bars of the crib was a bent metal frame the size of a post card. She gently brushed her fingers across it.. The frame—which was now empty—once held a card with the name and date of the infant who lay within.

“There used to be names in here, babies’ names,” she said. “So places like this aren’t all bad. Think of the parents—knowing their baby was in the hospital. Or maybe there weren’t any parents...and all this baby had, was this hospital.”

And after I did, I felt so tired—almost exhausted.

“Well, that’s why there’s artists,” she said.

I looked up at her and laughed.

“A lot of people think we’re just losers and dreamers and don’t want to get a real job,” she continued. “But it’s the artists who will take things like this—“

She pulled on the name plate, and gave it a quick hard yank, snapping it off.

“Things that seem to have no value,” she said, as she held the name plate before her.

“But we know that’s not true. We know that there were once a lot of names inside of this frame, and that some of those names never lived beyond this hunk of rust.”

She turned the metal frame and started to examine it for...names? Dates? A face?

And then she gently put it in her bag.

“Come on, I have what I need,” she said.

“Nothing else?” I asked.

“Not here,” she said.

What about the waste? I wanted to ask. The medical waste that we came here for? I felt glad that she chose this name plate to incorporate into her work of art—also felt—surprised—at the way she showed a sense of compassion, even mercy. I was a bit shocked—even scared—when she announced that she was ready to leave without a glob of poisonous waste! For I had become accommodated to the waste. We all have—we, meaning the semi permanent refugees like myself; we like the writers and artists I was about to join in New York. At one time or another, we all handled poisons. Some of us went further and took as much poison as we could, just for the sheer pleasure. Not me, well not much. I still sought and admired what was wasted, decayed, disturbed. For me, those quests were not much better than the other philosophical positions; I also should add such as muted bitterness, gloating irony. I loved Warhol. But I was drawn to the gray, grimy, ashy industrial scrape paint, and who knows what other toxic substances used by the modern German painter Anselm Kiefer. I have seen no more than six of his massive paintings, but each time I did, I felt as if I were looking into the soul of the world that I was both attracted to and repulsed by.

And now this rusted name plate that could never be enough to fit even the name of one dead infant. There is no personal remembrance for a death like this. The death of a life that—oh! When it was alive, one fleeting touch could have brought it so much life!

And the permanent loss of that life touching you can bring you the greatest pain...

Show us more, Young Artist, and show us in a way that will make everyone puzzle, admire, and complain about it.

After completing our first adventure, I could only conclude that our mission was accomplished. We had briefly come to the edge of the abyss and were able to come back with a scrap that had once been connected to a human being. Now, what I needed more than another adventure, was coffee. A big mug full of it. I needed some energy. I was already tapping into the old guk that has been clogging up my cells since I first became an addict—second semester freshman year at college. After I nearly flunked my first semester, I needed coffee the way frat boys needed beer. Of course there was a more disciplined approach to staying awake. I could have had a diet; no Dominoes Pizza every other night, along with other forms of self discipline. Naturally I chose the easier, corrupt approach. Also, the only corruption I had left to try was coffee. At least college left me with something else besides a taste for books that most people never read like Clarissa. Also one of the reasons why it is hard to take a job. Try reading at work—you won't be there too long, unless you're a substitute teacher, and only if you get an honors class with five students in it (dream on). Yet if you are cool about it you could

smoke pot at work. Even if you get caught, there is still a possibility you could save yourself by pleading dysfunctionism, and then going into a program or calling some hotline. There is no such program or understanding if you bring your art to the job. Get out, stay out, and you might as well drop out. With doing drugs, it shows that you are coping with a de-humanizing environment that you have not learned to give your mind and body to one hundred percent. (But with good counseling and a rehab program, you will). Come in with Friedrich Nietzsche on the job? Forget it. The idea of a job itself is too ludicrous to contemplate. Jobs are for machines. You're a human being. And also a poet. You practically live out of your car—and in the next twenty four hours, on a futon or couch.

I wonder which direction she is going to go.

Well, if she could do without coffee, that's not a bad idea. The java can also have a double edge; as another poet said at an open mic:

“Coffee is a drug that you take for your employer.”

That is why my job now has to be for poetry and reams of pages that are intentionally written by myself but are eventually scrawled over by everybody. But at least the coffee would be for me.

Fucking sky. Looks like the bottom of a smudged ashtray. No matter how much you scrape it, you are never going to get to the clear glass at the bottom. The only thing you can do is get a new ashtray. But when it is as big as the sky...

And it's too big to break. But I am still not ready to give up being a cosmic delinquent and try.

And this old hospital, after it becomes smudged into this small panel of the horizon?

I closed my eyes—what I sometimes do when I try to see the future of something. No reason why, I just do it. But this time, I did not see anything. And when I opened my eyes a moment later, I saw—or thought I saw—a fleeting piece of white—a patient in a hospital gown—looking at me from one of the upper windows of that tower. You have to stay behind long enough so that two artists can write a poem about you or put your hospital bracelet in a painting. But you will still be nothing more than an abstraction of suffering and loss.

“Earth to space boy, come on! New York City is calling you!”

“What? New York?” I said as I began to swim my way out of a cotton ball mental fog.

The way The Young Artist now glared at me and crossed her arms, brought me back to the present, which snarled or winked back at me from my red Converse high top sneakers that were now on her feet.

“Well, you ready?” I said to her, as if I was the one who had been made to wait on account of her ephiphany-izing.

“Are you?” she sharply said back.

“Just be careful with those Converse, alright?” I said. “And remember where they came from.”

“Come to think of it, they fit rather nice,” she said, and then giggled.

Damn it, I thought, as I shook my head, and then started the car. They’re the cherry red colored ones—my favorite pair and the color that goes with everything black. Besides, they are the only style of foot wear that will let you get away with wearing red on your feet if you are a guy and still want to look tough.

“Winking at yourself?” she said.

This was in wry response to the way I had just winked at myself in the rearview mirror.

“To let myself know how cool I am.”

“Oh, gimmie a fucking—“

“Now let’s go to the diner and eat some meat!”

“Not me.”

“Vegan vamp—“

“And don’t say ‘vegan vampire’” she said before I could finish saying it. “I get that all the time. From my friends; that, and how I sometimes like to smoke.”

By the time she said it, she already had a cigarette out and in her mouth. A moment later, she lit it with a plastic cigarette lighter.

“Just like you need coffee, I need cigarettes.”

Fortunately, we were now moving so that when she exhaled, the smoke was sucked right out of the window.

Pot smoke? It is harmless and sweet like baby’s breath.

Cigarettes? Poison from out of the factory smokestack.

“Funny about what you said before—how everybody needs one vice. I had a teacher who said that too,” she explained.

“Really? Your teacher told you that?”

“He was also a little psycho too, but—“

“And what was his vice? Did he ever say?”

“Yeah,” she said. After which she paused, shook her head, and then said: “Teaching.”

“Excellent!” I said. “Why couldn’t more teachers make their teaching their vice!”

The Young Artist stretched her arms behind her and declared:

“Art!”

“Art?”

“That’s going to be my vice!”

As in illegal? Narcotic? Criminal? Dangerous? I thought, and the only logical response I could come up with, was,

“Cool!”

If Art could become a vandal, why not a drug addict, a topless dancer, a porn

star. Did that mean I was ready to take off my shirt and start dancing on top of a bar for money? Well, if somebody was going to pay me for it, (and considering how I had worked as a substitute teacher for which there was never enough compensation)...Regardless of whether I ended up jobless or on a wanted poster for spray painting “No Sale” across a famous painting, I was now drawn to the further possibilities of Art. I doubt if I was going to take a crow bar and break into a museum in the near future, but did I even need to go the museum? Weren’t the two of us proving that there was art outside of the museum? Probably not great art, and maybe nothing more than an idea of art. From the literary angle, this delinquent direction was tapping into previous writers like Francois Villon and Jean Genet, but so what. This was how the two of us were spending our day: instead of going to work or school, we were driving around in search of material for our art, along with trying to discover an aesthetic, or a vision, that would enhance what we were trying to create. Were we going to get paid for this? Were we going to get graded for this? Well, could you afford to pay us for what we were now doing and discovering? The answer is no, and for the simple reason that we stole this morning for ourselves. We were artists, and artists need to do things like periodically drive around for what seems to be no purpose and to make periodic stops at places that seem to have no reason to be studied, much less visited, so there! Sure, a grant for this would help, but that is going to take time; from filling out all the paper work, to buying stamps to fit on the envelope; so in the meantime, you could help out artists like us by giving us some money for gas. Honestly, gas money is all you need, (that and money for coffee and a few other things.) The rest—we should be able to steal. We’d better be able to steal. If we can’t, then we’re not artists.



*check out The Drive in portions in
issues of cc&d magazine...*

performance art

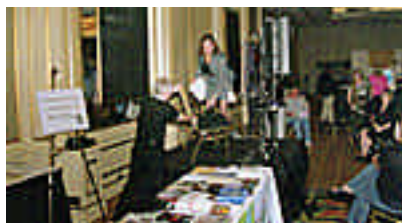
final feature at the 2006 Society
of Professional Journalism Expo

people's rights misunderstood

I had a dream the other night
I was walking down the street in the city
and a man came up to me
a skinny man, he lost his hair
and he walked right up to me
and told me no one cares anymore
and he took my hand
and asked me to care about him
"I'm not supposed to be like this" he said
"I'm not homeless, you know
I have AIDS"
and I wanted to tell him that
someone did care,
that he didn't have to die alone,
but you know how sometimes
you can't do things in your dream
no matter how hard you try,
well, my mouth was open, wide open,
but no words were coming out

and you know, I'm afraid to go to sleep tonight
I'm afraid I'll be walking down that street in the city
I'm afraid that a pregnant woman
will come up to me
and ask me for a hanger
and I'll tell her there has to be another way
and she'll say this is the way she chooses

I'm afraid I'll be walking down that street in the city
and a woman will come up to me
and tell me she doesn't want to live
because she's just been raped
and her world doesn't make sense anymore
and I'll tell her that she can make it
that one in three women are raped in their lifetime
and they all make it



and besides, the world doesn't make sense
to anyone
and she'll say that doesn't make me
feel any better

and I'm afraid that I won't be able to
walk down that street in the city again
without it looking like a Quentin Tarantino movie
where everyone is pointing guns at each other
yes, Mr. NRA
you are right
I feel so much safer
knowing everyone out there has a gun
that there are more gun shops than gas stations
and that everyone is so willing
to do the killing

why do my dreams have to be
so much like real life

I've got to stop dreaming
of that damned street



everything was alive and dying

I

I had a dream the other night
I walked out of the city
to a forest
and there were neatly paved bicycle paths
and trash cans every fifty feet
and trash every ten

and then a raccoon came right up to me
she had a few little baby raccoons
following her, it was so cute, I
wish I had my camera

and she spoke to me,
she said, thank you
thank you for not buying furs,
I know you humans are pretty smart,
you have to be able to figure out a way
to keep yourselves warm
without killing me

and I said, you know they don't
do it for warmth,
they do it for fashion, they do it
for power. And she said I know.
But thank you anyway.

II

Then I walked a little further
and there was a stray cat
she still had her little neon collar on
with a little bell
and she walked a few feet,
stretched her front paws,
oh, she looked so darling
and then she walked right up to me
and she said thank you
and I said for what?
And she just looked at me for a moment,

her little ears were standing straight up,
and then she said, you know,
in some countries I'm considered
a delicacy. And I said how
do you know of these things?
And she said
when somebody eats one of you
word gets around
and then she looked up at me again
and said, and in some countries
the cow is sacred. Wouldn't they
love to see how you humans
prepare them for slaughter, how you
hang them upside-down
and slit their throats
so their still beating hearts
will drain out all the blood for you
and she said isn't it funny
how arbitrary your decision
to eat meat is?
and I said, don't put me
in that category, I don't eat meat
and she said I know

III

And I walked deeper in to the forest
managed to get away from the
picnic tables and the outhouses
that lined the forest edges
the roaring cars gave way to the
rustling of tree branches
crackling of fallen leaves
under my step

when the wind tunneled through
the wind whistled and sang
as it flew past the bark

and leaves

I walked
listened to the crack of dead branches
under my feet
and I felt a branch against my shoulder
I looked up and I could hear
the trees speak to me,
and they said
thank you for letting the
endangered animals live here amongst us
we do think they're so pretty
and it would be a shame to see them go
and thank you for recycling paper
because you're saving us
for just a little while longer

we've been on this planet for so long
embedded in the earth
we do have souls, you know
you can hear it in our songs
we cling with our roots
we don't want to let go

and I said, but I don't do much,
I don't do enough
and they said we know
but we'll take what we can get

IV

and I woke up in a sweat

V

so tell me, George Bush
so tell me, Bob Dole
so tell me, Newt Gingrich
so tell me, Pat Buchanan
so tell me, Jesse Helms
so tell me, Rush Limbaugh
so tell me, Sean Hannity
if you woke up from that dream
would you be in a sweat, too?

VI

Do you even know why
we should save the rain forest?
Oh preserve the delicate balance,
just tear the whole forest down,
what difference does it make?
Put in some orange groves
so our concentrate orange juice
can be a little cheaper

did you know that medical researchers
have a very, very hard time
trying to come up with synthetic
cures for diseases on their own?
It helps them out a little if they can first
find the substance in nature.
A tree that appears in the rain forest
may be the only one of its species.
Or one like it may be two miles away,
instead of right next to it. I wonder
how many cures we've destroyed
to plant more orange groves.
Serves us right.

VII

You know my motives aren't selfless
I know that these things are worthwhile in my life

I'd like to find a cure to these diseases
before I die of them
and I'm not just a vegetarian
because I think it's wrong to kill an animal
unless I have to
I also know the excess protein
pulls the calcium away from my bones
and gives me osteoporosis
and the excess fat gives me heart attacks
and I also know that we could be feeding
ten times more people
with the same resources used for meat production

You know, I know you're looking at me
and calling me an extremist
but I'm sitting here, looking around me
looking at the destruction caused by family values
and thinking the right, moral, non-violent decisions
are also those extreme ones

VIII

everything is linked here
we destroy our animals
so we can be wasteful and violent
we destroy our plants
we destroy our earth
we're even destroying our air
we wreak havoc on the soil, on the atmosphere
we dump our wastes into our lakes
we pump aerosol cans and exhaust pipes

and you tell me I'm extreme

and these animals and forests keep calling out to me
the oceans, the wind

and I'm beginning to think
that we just keep doing it
because we don't know how to stop
and deep inside we feel the pain of
all that we've killed
and we try to control it by
popping a chemical-filled pain-killer

we live through the guilt
by taking caffeine, nicotine, morphine
and we keep ourselves thin with saccharin
and we keep ourselves sane with our alcohol poisoning
and when that's not enough
maybe a line of coke



maybe shoot ourselves in the head
in front of the mirror in the master bedroom
or maybe just take some pills
walk into the garage, turn on the car
and just
fall asleep

in the wild
you have no power over anyone else

now that we're civilized
we create our own wild

maybe when we have all this power
the only choice we have
is to destroy ourselves

and so we do

the state of the nation

my phone rang earlier today
and I picked it up and said "hello"
and a man on the other end said,
Is this Janet Kuypers?
and I said, "Yes, it is, may I ask
who is calling?"
and he said, Yeah, hi, this is
George Washington, and I'm sitting here
with Jefferson and we wanted to
tell you a few things. And I said
"Why me?" And he said Excuse me,
I believe I said I was the one
that wanted to do the talking.
God, that's the problem with
Americans nowadays. They're so
damn rude. And I said, "You know,
you really didn't have to use
language like that," and he said,
Oh, I'm sorry, it's just I've been
dead so long, I lose all control
of my manners. Well, anyway, we just
wanted to tell you some stuff. Now,
you know that we really didn't have
much of an idea of what we were
doing when we were starting up
this country here, we didn't have
much experience in creating
bodies of power, so I could understand
how our Constitution could be
misconstrued



and then he put in a dramatic pause
and said,
but when we said people had
a right to bear arms
we meant to protect themselves
from a government gone wrong
and not so you could kill
and innocent person
for twenty dollars cash
and when we said freedom of
religion we included the separation
of church and state because freedom
of religion could also mean freedom
from religion
and when we said freedom of speech
we had no idea you'd be
burning a flag
or painting pictures of Christ
doused in urine
or photographing people with
whips up their respective anatomies
but hell, I guess we've got to
grin and bear it
because if we ban that
the next thing they'll ban is books
and we can't have that
and I said, "But there are schools
that have books banned, George."
And he said Oh.

True Happiness in the New Millennium

*"I ain't never found peace upon the breast of a girl
I ain't never found peace with the religions of the world
I ain't never found peace at the bottom of a glass*

*Sometimes it seems the more I ask for the less I receive
Sometimes it seems the more I ask for the less I receive
The only true freedom is freedom from the heart's desires
And the only true happiness this way lies"*

- Matt Johnson

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
I'm the new savior the savior of science
the savior of strength
the savior of survival
survival of the fittest
survival of the best

and I'm here to tell you we're starting anew
so fasten your seat belts
hang on to your hats
place your seat trays in their upright and locked position
for it's a bumpy ride, and I'll tell you why

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
the millennium of reason and logic and strength
and I don't want to hear about your self-destruction
I don't want to hear your whining, psychosis,
your depression, suicide, alcohol and drugs
and just what made you think that playing with needles
and escape would make things better somehow
God, I've always hated needles anyway
what is it with you people

well, you need a leader and I'm stepping up to the plate
you keep asking for a big brother and I'm here to set you straight
you want someone to wipe your noses for you
well, pick up the damn tissue and do it yourself
because when you give up your rights, you take away mine
and we're not having any of that



I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
and you say to me you need crystal meth
so you can stay awake through work
and you say to me that you don't need to drink,
that you just like the taste
and you say to me that with all your escapism
you still don't feel any better
and you say to me that sometimes suicide
is the only answer

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
I'm here to usher in a whole new generation
so stop asking for things and start working for things
because X is for ecstasy as long as it's fast
and X is for extra but there's always a cost
and ecstasy doesn't come without extra work
no matter how many corners you cut
and you know, X is for X-Ray and I see right through that

they say that Eve ate from the tree from knowledge
but you know, she shouldn't have stopped just then
cause the loggers are raping the trees of knowledge
the loggers are raping the forests of talent
the forests of ability the forests of reason
of skill of logic perseverance and life
we're letting them rape the forests of excellence
and you know it's now time to take it all back
because I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
and I'm here to tell you how it's going to be done

you're looking for peace in all the wrong places
you're asking your leaders to save you from yourself
but your leaders are losers and they're worse off than you

I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
where it's time to take charge and it's time fess up
only you can deliver you from your own sins
but first you must know what sin really is

it's time to make choices and it's time to lay claim
to everything we've been blindly giving away
because I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
take charge of yourself, and I'll take charge of me
I'm my leader, not yours, so wipe your own damn noses

take it in to your hands, people, mold your own tools
this is the new millennium, and this is your chance
because no one should be showing us how to fail
people mastered that feat a millennia ago
so set your own rules and do something fast
cause it's time to take charge and it's time to be alive



I'm here to usher in a whole new millennium
And I'm waiting for you to usher in yours
Because true happiness this way lies, my friend
and I won't wait long if you lag behind
cause I'm setting my rules so step out of my way

I'm here to tell you there's a new sensation
and I'm here to tell you there's a new salvation
and that true happiness this way lies

Burn It In

Once I was at a beach
off the west coast of Florida
it was New Year's eve
and the yellow moon hung over the gulf
like a swaying lantern.
And I was watching the waves crash in front of me
with a friend
and the wind picked up
and my friend just stared at that moon for a while
and then closed his eyes.
I asked him what he was thinking.
He said, "I wanted to look at this scene,
and memorize it, burn it into my brain,
record it in my mind, so I can call it up when I want to.
So I can have it with me always."

I too have my recorders.
I burn these things into my brain,
I burn these things onto pages.
I pick and choose what needs to be said,
what needs to be remembered.

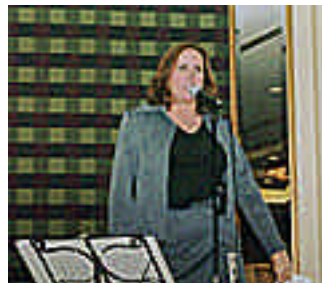
Every year, at the end of the year
I used to write in a journal
recall the things that happened to me
log in all of the memories I needed to keep
because that was what kept me sane
that was what kept me alive.

When I first went to college
I was studying to be a computer science
engineer, I wanted to make a lot of money
I wanted to beat everyone else
because burned in my brain were the taunts
of kids who were in cliques
so others could do the thinking for them
because burned in my brain were the evenings
of the high school dances I never went to
because burned in my brain were the people
I knew I was better than
who thought they were better than me.



Well, yes, I wanted to make a lot of money
I wanted to beat everyone else
but I hated what I was doing
I hated what I saw around me
hated all the pain people put each other through
and all of these memories just kept flooding me
so in my spare time
to keep me sane, to keep me alive
I wrote down the things I could not say
that was how I recorded things.

When I looked around me, and saw friends
raping my friends
I wrote, I burned into these nightmares with a pen
and yes, I have this recorded
I have all of this recorded.



What did you think I was doing
 when I was stuffing hand-written notes into my pockets
 or typing long hours into the night?
 In college, I had two roommates
 who in their spare time would watch movies in our living room
 and cross-stitch. I never understood this.
 In my spare time, I was not watching other's stories
 or weaving thread to keep my hands busy
 I was sitting in the corner of a cafe
 scribbling into my notebook.
 I was sitting in the university computer lab
 slamming my hands, my fingers against the keyboard
 because there were too many atrocities in the world
 too many injustices that I had witnessed
 too many people who had wronged me



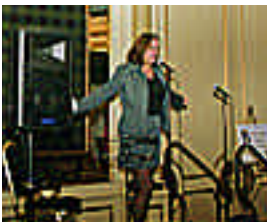
you want to know why I do the things I do

and I had a lot of work to do.
 There had to be a record of what you've done.

Did you think your crimes would go unpunished?
 And did you think that you could come back, years later,
 slap me on the back with a friendly hello
 and think I wouldn't remember?
 You see, that's what I have my poems for
 so there will always be a record
 of what you have done
 I have defiled many pages
 in your honor, you who swung
 your battle ax high above your head
 and thought no one would remember in the end.
 Well, I made a point to remember.
 Yes, I have defiled many pages
 and have you defiled many women?
 You, the man who rapes my friends?
 You, the man who rapes my sisters?
 You, the man who rapes me?
 Is this what makes you a strong man?

I had to record these things
 that is what kept me together
 when people were dying
 that is what kept me together
 when we went off to wars
 we couldn't explain
 that is what kept me together
 when my friends were raped
 and left for dead
 that is what kept me together
 when no one bothered to notice this
 or change this
 or care about this
 these recordings kept me together

I need to record these things
 to remind myself
 of where I came from
 I need to record these things
 to remind myself
 that there are things to value
 and things to hate
 I need to record these things
 to remind myself
 that there are things worth fighting for
 worth dying for
 I need to record these things
 to remind myself
 that I am alive





children *churches* & daddies

the **UN**religious,
NONfamily-oriented
literary & art mag



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