

children  
churches  
& daddies

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## **Scars art**

4 (editor's photos taken at the Taste of Logan, where she did a poetry show feature outdoors), 11 (John Galt on the carpet), 12 (a collage of Euros, John "Easy Fishing" with a blue gill at an aquarium, and a coy pond at Confucius Temple in Shanghai, China), 16 (chicago skyline from the water, with landmarks from around the word superimposed). Cover art is a photograph of Joel.

## the boss lady's editorial

# Election Hell & Gossip Galore

Okay, so when the midterm elections were coming around, bizarre stories were springing out like mad (people wanting to cause trouble were winding those Jack-in-the-Boxes so tight that the stores just *had* to come out right before election day). Let's think about it for a moment...

It was released that Mark Foley was sending hot text messages to a former male Congressional page (okay, he's not married, but *really*, do we need to know this?). But Newsweek reported in its October 5 edition that Foley's homosexuality was an open secret in Washington, and Foley was even in a long-term relationship. The thing I find funny is that although this is just one Republican Congressman, people were being polled and questioning the "Republicanability" of other people Republicans would normally vote for. (Really, if one political person in your party is gay and sends IMs back and forth with a Congressional page, is that grounds to shake you decision to vote for *anyone* in your party?)

But wait, as the election date grew closer, a Democrat running had Michael J. Fox speak in an ad to help support the Democrat and stem-cell research. The problem was that Michael J. Fox's symptoms of his Parkinson's disease were very evident in the ad, and *everyone* wondered if Fox had decided to stop taking his medication for this ad (I mean, Fox *did* say he stopped taking his meds to talk to Congress to make people realize the effects of Parkinson's...). Rush Limbaugh even went on his radio show to say that he thought Fox was exaggerating his symptoms for effect (the only reason I saw it was because *The Daily Show* talked about it, and *The Colbert Report* went to great lengths to make fun of Rush Limbaugh's web broadcast of his mimicking Fox's motions). Now, I won't get into whether Rush Limbaugh is a fool for thinking that, if Michael J. Fox is fair game to be picked on because he threw his hat in the political arena by being in an ad supporting a Democrat, but





I *can* say that after seeing Fox in a later interview with Anderson Cooper, it was evident that his Parkinson's is at the point that he can't just stop taking his meds to show the effects of Parkinson's. About 20% of people taking these meds have this reaction, where instead of getting stiff in later stages of Parkinson's by not taking their meds, they get very limber in their reaction and have uncontrollable physical responses.

But I *can* question some of the comments Fox made in his Anderson Cooper interview... Now, people questioned the notion of “killing a life” by using embryonic stem cells, and Fox said that these samples are actually just being thrown away. His numbers were too high for what is just “thrown away,” but he otherwise has a good point.

But the thing is, I don't even get that much time to consider what Michael J. Fox said, because other bizarre news gets thrown at people at the same time... The only main thing I can think of (other than people having an issue with so many existing Republican cogs in President Bush's well-oiled machine) is Ted Haggard, a Colorado Evangelical reverend. You see, just weeks before the midterm elections, a gay prostitute (Mike Jones) made allegations that Haggard paid him for sex for three years.

Now, I know this is about some religious guy and not a political icon, but (A) Rev. Ted Haggard *was* a leader, by being the president of the National Association of Evangelicals (sounding like political leaders...?), but more importantly (B) the revelation that an evangelical leader paid for sex and bought drugs from a male escort was one of the first steps to put Republicans more “on the ropes” for this election. Even *The Age* reported that “Mr Haggard, 50, resigned late last week as president of the National Association of Evangelicals, a lobby organization in Washington that put him in regular contact with the White House and George Bush” — which is hopefully enough to make anyone consider that *someone* is linking these things to politics.

And the thing is (this one really gets me) is that although a gay male prostitute had “revealed” to the world that he had a three-year *paid* affair with Rev. Ted Haggard, the married reverend with five kids later made the statement that he *did* pay for a massage from this gay male prostitute, and that he also bought methamphetamine from him... And that he actually never even used the meth.

Yeah, *that* makes sense. That's a good story to explain why this

Evangelical reverend didn't have sex with the gay male prostitute. He only paid him for a massage, and paid for meth — which, by the way, he didn't even take. I believe that. I know, I know, they later gave Mike Jones a lie detector test and saw that he probably wasn't telling the truth, but I have to admit that it doesn't matter if Haggard's explanation was true or not, it's still a good story. "I didn't have sex with a gay prostitute, I just paid him for a massage and paid for meth, which I inconveniently never even took."

You think a lot of crap doesn't come out right around election time? I won't even begin to mention the Hell the Bush Administration has gone through near election time (I'll save all of that for another editorial, trust me), but let's summarize some of the points Ron Gunzburger brought up at a blog archive at [politics1.com](http://politics1.com):

"Congressman Bob Ney (R-OH) admitted accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars of unlawful gifts and trips from convicted felon lobbyist Jack Abramoff in exchange for official actions... It's been over a year since the FBI search warrant uncovered nearly \$100,000 of cash hidden in the Louisiana Democrat Congressman Bill Jefferson's home freezer... Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT) or Congressman John Doolittle (R-CA)... Even consider that the criminal charges against resigned House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX) remain pending. .."

The point? Well, I guess the point is that the dirty laundry comes out toward election time... I even heard news broadcasters report that Rudy Giuliani still had the highest voting percentages if he ran for President, and Rudy Giuliani hasn't even said he's *running* for President. But those



same newscasters even speculated that Rudy Giuliani may be holding off on starting his campaigning for the Presidency because everyone knows that the more you're out there, the more you're exposed to having every aspect of your life scrutinized, so people can out your most bizarre secrets out there and put every part of your life through the ringer. You know, like how we've seen all of this mess come out right around election time.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Kuypers" with a registered trademark symbol.

Janet Kuypers, Editor in Chief

## The Sins of the Father

**Bill DeArmond**

And so it has all come down to this  
Every tick of the clock on the wall  
is an eternity of memories  
between each beat

I do not sleep or eat anymore  
since you've gone  
I am in constant pain  
physically and emotionally  
since you've gone

And so I sit in this chair in the dark  
in this quiet living room  
of a house I didn't want  
Listening to the rest of my life  
measured in the movement of a heartbeat

And slowly I become my father  
lost in despair without my mother  
Sitting in his chair  
in an empty house in the dark  
with a shotgun in his lap  
talking to the dog  
listening to the clock on the wall  
mark his remaining time

## INTIMACY

**Mel Waldman**

Drill  
a  
dark  
hole

through my mask of life

✧  
smash  
my mask of death

after 2 deaths,  
at least,

you may discover  
a secret landscape,  
my lonely place

✧  
cannibal that I am,  
I welcome you home

# In an Old Home

Michael Levy

He lets out a hiss  
from the corner of his mouth  
it sounds like air  
- escaping from a blocked radiator  
this is something he does on  
regular intervals  
eighty-seven years on earth  
has taken its toll  
now locked safely away from family  
in an old peoples home  
he reads all the negative news  
then suddenly he  
hisses himself from earthly erroneusness  
traveling far away  
to a better place  
soon the hissing will stop forever

# Hiding in Plain Sight

Valorie Mall

She always pulled the covers over her head.  
It was futile, she knew, but made a willing effort.  
She must try to hide from what always came next.  
Her mind was her ally taking her far away,  
To places the darkness never could reach.  
As long as she could remain unseen,  
Then the treasure she guarded was sure to be safe.

Alone in a land of spirit and light,  
She clung to her faith that help could arrive.  
Her present unbearable,  
Her future unknown,  
Her body the war zone where battles were fought.  
Compromising childish health ever more tenuous.  
Pain was her constant reminder,  
Of torturous touch and unspeakable invasion.  
Sometimes she was helpless except to murmur, "Please"

Unworthy as she felt she was willing to try,  
To fight back against dark chuckles,  
And grasping horrid hands.  
So she always pulled the covers over her head.  
Bravely facing whatever came nexr,  
A frightened child, barely breathing but never hopeless.

# SUGGESTIONS

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They suggest we try and save garden creatures  
and ocean whales before it's too late

They suggest our luxury choices are sure to leave  
the generation of 3000 with none

They suggest parents are scared of their children  
and raising monsters

They suggest religious leaders pay more attention  
to compassion than division

They suggest politicians aren't listening to those  
who put them there

They suggest our multicultural societies are failing  
themselves and each other

They suggest we start learning the lessons wars  
should have taught us

They suggest we're but the living will and testament  
of a dying planet

So who are they, daring to suggest humankind look  
to its shortcomings?

Listen, to leafy choirs, anxious waves, busy rehearsing  
a eulogy for the world's passing

**Naked in the Corner,**  
art by Cheryl Townsend





# whiskey and ice

jim greenwald

it burns as it flows across the lips  
to the pit of the stomach  
foul tasting brown liquid  
it extinguishes reality  
it is oppressive  
unbearable  
burning...searing  
turning the stomach

over ice he says

you see, the ice is a cool breeze  
a release from the oppressive heat  
the unbearable burning and searing

I wanted to be alone in this oppression  
but people feel a need to form packs  
Interrupting the quiet with their chatter

and I am left to search for my whiskey and ice  
until then it is the oppressive, unbearable  
burning of another day

# Patriotism

IB Rad

Patriotism  
inoculates a community  
against foreign invasion;  
yet, when offensively applied,  
it inflames the body politic,  
and, like an immune reaction gone awry,\*  
afflicts healthy civic organs  
such as freedom of thought  
or speech,  
or any constituent  
rejecting the party line.  
But then, sadly,  
as the adage goes,  
“Nobody’s ever lost an election  
By waving the flag.”

\* a not uncommon medical condition leading  
to a variety of maladies, including Lupus.

# The Hearts of Men

**Damion  
Hamilton**

What stirs them?

There's too much to remember  
And too much to be forgotten

And our tasks keep us alive

What did you have to do today for a living?

I spoke with a young waitress the other day,  
And she told me the tips pay very well,  
But there's not a day goes by, that she wishes  
She wouldn't die in a car accident

And one drives the rush hours in the morning  
And evenings, and I think a lot of people  
Must feel this way

It's what man does to man

I know what the law is

The Law is a police officer, with  
A gun taking your money

Owners and police officers,  
Do you sleep well at night?

It seems that the more powerful  
We become, the more people  
We kill

And I know what power is

Power

Is a blind irrational force



**Toxic Waste, art by  
Christine Sorich**

# THE EVIL OF CARS

**Luis Cuauhtemoc Berriozabal**

Do you drive a car?  
I don't want to talk  
With people like you.

Cars will crash into  
My trees. They will be  
Destroyed forever.

I believe those which  
Drive cars have destroyed  
Our country and I

You're delusional  
Because you drive a  
Car. I won't talk to

Won't stand for it. I'm  
An asphalt man and  
I know the evil

Someone such as you.  
I'd rather talk to  
A Martian because

Of cars. I'm going  
To tear up freeways  
And plant trees instead.

They don't believe in  
Cars. They travel by  
Spaceships, which I like.

---

# BLOOD RED CRIES

**John Wayne Vogels**

The eye whispers  
Through blinking lips  
Caressing its naked sorrows  
It welcomes the fruit  
Cradling its abyss

# Cat, Woman, and Man

**Kenneth W. Anderson, Jr.**

They sat closely to each other  
underneath the shade  
of long yellows  
and a few lingering greens.

The man arched his back,  
stretched and yawned,  
finally resting against the old willow.  
The woman placed her head upon his chest,  
listening.

The evening breeze carried his whispers to her  
and she in return lovingly scratched his belly.  
And in the restless distance  
sat her fat cat,  
glaring,  
and waiting.



# LIKE OLD AFGHAN MONEY

**David Lawrence**

Interludes are not built for grudges in the space  
That was our reciprocity.  
I have grown a garden of your concupiscence.  
It's like loving you that much  
Could pull the flagpole down.  
Terrorism is what the impotent do  
When they want to distract the dick detectives  
From their misdemeanors.  
If I were the president of the United States  
I would shoot Moslem wives,  
Put them out of their misery,  
So the men wouldn't get such good practice,  
Imagining their infidelities,  
Beating their faces like old Afghan money.

---



# Friendly Freeway Tarp

**Michael A. Rodriguez**

Tattered, weathered  
Piece of blue tarp  
Caught on a prickly  
Bush on the shoulder of  
The freeway gently waves  
Ciao aloha shalom  
To each car whooshing by;  
I drive by the cheerful tarp  
And accept its friendly gesture  
And when I drive away I see  
It waving in the rearview,  
Ciao aloha shalom.



## Fishing

**Jamie  
Connell**

I would rather fish  
Instead of being in school  
Writing some haikus



# Demolition Work

M. Ana Diz

Through the window on my right, construction workers slowly perform their demolishing act.

From the shadows of a wall, I make out paintings, a bed, two chests of drawers no longer in need for keys, ceiling, or doors.

I look with envy at the mound of rubble on the left where everything has been liberated from its shape.

# Tender

Abhijit Nagaraj

There is a something-watt light bulb, and it is coughing.

If there was a window, and if you were closely watching, this flickering, you would think you were looking at a silent film in a deserted theater.

She is a something-years-old woman on a squeaky bed and she is watching an old movie.

(It is about a round-bellied tribe that roasts and sacrifices souls in a big fire pit.

She is eating butter popcorn from a bag, which she microwaved the wrong side up. She drops fat crumbs everywhere, and the bag is nearly hollow. It retains its shape, though.

I'm a little boy squatting outside her door, on a bearded foot rug. A few hours before, she left a microwavable soul on the elevator, by accident I think, and I try to squeeze it under her door, so she can have it.

I know she's always looking for it when she's getting ready for work in the morning.

# Homo-Journal

## Je'Free

Thank God for my doggy to walk  
I met you at the beach pier  
(not public restroom)  
in your well-coordinated  
gym outfit

Months passed,  
we have dated in arts museums,  
and watched theater musicals  
of female icons (via drag)

We talked about dilemmas -  
From parents, to school,  
to work, to religion;  
Conversations far from  
moving in, settling down,  
marriage (in some open State)

Of no commitment,  
I decided last night to dare  
search a one-nighter  
through the internet  
jammed by twinks, bears,  
tweakers, queens of size,  
and hypermasculinity

Of no luck from flakers,  
I checked out the club (Dead!);  
Then, the adult book/video arcade,  
only to find kinky psychos  
in leather

I did not even try the baths  
where my vers-bottom friend  
got crabs from a vers-top dude

The next day,  
you called for a cool-off  
I kinda expected that heartbreak;  
So, I called my gal pals  
to have a mud-pack facial session  
in preparation for  
tomorrow's pride parade



**Neither or Both,**  
art by **Aaron Wilder**

# Chicago

**Michael H. Brownstein**

I have come back to this place of snow  
and frozen water. A hard wind forces  
snow snakes across plowed asphalt. Already  
the white shine of winter is dirty grey.  
I have heard the tall buildings make this place  
immune to tornado. Once Stephen and I  
walked from the bus stop to our apartment,  
the wind like infantry at close quarter.  
Stephen flagged a cab with a block to go.  
We have hurricane winds, but no hurricanes;  
a rising lake, but no floods; accumulations of snow,  
but no whiteouts. I have traveled far.  
It is late and it is not late. Stephen collapsed  
on a bus, an episode of the brain, and vanished  
into a system offering little help. I moved  
to a house ravaged by squirrel and termite.  
Snow covers dead leaves I do not rake.  
A small pond in the back is half frozen.  
Dead weeds bend to the wind, break. Lately  
I have worried over a legacy, my daughter  
hiding in the closet crying; my son  
on his dinosaur rug placing models  
of komodo dragons and tribobibites,  
pumas and saber toothed tigers,  
men and broken pottery.





prose  
the meat and potatoes stuff

## The Conversation

Bill DeArmond

"Jerry?"

"Yes, dear?"

"Have you talked to Charles yet?"

"About what, dear?"

"About what we discussed last night."

"Jean, I just haven't had the time."

"Jerry?"

"I know, I know. But I just don't know how to approach it. Something like this has to be handled carefully. You have to think these things over. This is a moment that could scar a kid for life."

"Jerry, do I have to tell him myself?"

"No, dear, that wouldn't be appropriate. I'll do it."

"When?"

"Soon, dear, soon."

"Do you want him finding out from some little boy on the playground? That would be nice, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, dear."

"What did you say?"

"I mean, no, dear, it wouldn't be right for him to find out about it from any of

## CHUMMING

G.A. Scheinoha

There's no roof over this yawn, rafters squared up under the stars like the ribs of a cap-sized ark. Might as well be carp bones in the desert, bleached white a hundred generations after the flood. The occupants at the bottom of the slate sided, lumber and nails vessel are already drowning, too little sleep, too much talk.

True, she may have a mouth like a sturgeon, a razor tooth hunger that'll gnaw the arms off anything in sight. She swims in an ocean of air as freely as the largest predator, scavenges easily as a shark, inhales deeply not only what she smells but everything seen and heard.

He cossacks a path through the frontier of civility, an unknown continent to those without a gentle tongue or passport soul. Somehow, he senses it isn't enough. The premature ejaculation of his words isn't fish eggs of any sort; caviar black as a tsar's heart.

She leaves behind not ain gray tail, nor a stream of bubbles ejected like rejected spawn. Just the torn fuselage, the rattled loose rivets of a life, hewn away as sign she's been here. Before fantailing, tight hips encased in the flimsy second skin of an obscenely short skirt, tantalizing swish in search of bigger, fleshier prey.

the kids at school.”

“Well?”

“Well what?”

“Are you going to tell him?”

“Alright, alright, I’ll tell him.”

“When, Jerry?”

“Now, Jean. I’m going to tell him now.”

\*\*\*\*\*

“Hey, Chuckie, what are you doing?”

“Just playing army, Dad.”

“You don’t have many soldiers there for a battle.”

“I know, that’s why I asked Santa for some army men and tanks and junk.”

“Yes...well...listen Chuck, your Mother and I were talking and...well...she thought...we thought...there was something you ought to know.”

“Know what, Dad?”

“Well, son, you’re getting old enough and...well...there are some things you need to know about. I mean...we led you to believe some things that weren’t exactly true because we...uh...we felt that it was something a little boy should believe.”

“Are you talking about all that Santa junk?”

“You know about that?”

“Yes, sir, and about the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy, too.”

“What about the stork?”

“Sir?”

“Never mind. I just thought it might save us another talk later. How long have you known about this?”

“A long time. Before last Christmas anyway. My best friend Joey...you know Joey, Dad, the guy I hit on the head with a sledge hammer when we were testing that old army helmet to see if it was bullet-proof?”

“You mean the kid with the big ears?”

“Yeah...well...he told me.”

“How did you feel about it?”

“At first I didn’t believe him. I mean, you and Mom seemed so serious about it and all. I never thought you wouldn’t tell me the truth. And I guess I just didn’t want to believe it.”

“What do you mean, Chuck?”

“Dad, it was like I wasn’t a kid any more. All the fun stuff about Christmas would be gone. It just wouldn’t be the same if I let on I knew. You know, we’d go over to Aunt Daphne’s house on Christmas Eve and all the family would be there and all the kids to play with and all the food and cokes and junk. Then we’d go upstairs and watch all those old cartoons Uncle Don

had. We'd watch videos of last year's Christmas. It was really neat, but all the time I kept wanting to go home and go to sleep so Santa would come. And then finally we'd leave and it would be cold and frosty and I'd be looking out the back window for Santa's sleigh. And then we'd get home and you would sit on my bed and make up a special Christmas story until I fell asleep and then I'd wake up before anybody else when it was still dark and I'd sneak downstairs and plug in the tree and lay under it, just smelling the pine and looking at all my presents to open until I couldn't wait any more and I'd run up to your room and wake up you and Mom so we could open our presents. And for a long, long time after that I'd feel really good and special. You know what I mean, Dad?"

"Yes, son I felt the same way when I was your age."

"Did you feel sad?"

"Sad?"

"When Grandpa told you, were you sad?"

"Your Grandfather didn't tell me."

"Who did?"

"It was some kid at school. He got mad at me one day and just blurted it out. I asked my Father and finally he said it was true. I guess, in a way, it hurt my feelings that my Dad didn't tell me. Yes, for a long time after that I felt sad."

"I know, Dad. I know I have to get old and all but I feel like I really lost something I liked and I'll never get it back again."

"I know, son. I know."

\*\*\*\*\*

"Jerry?"

"Yes, dear?"

"Have you talked to Charles yet?"

"Jean?"

"What?"

"Shut up, dear."

## **From A Floating Apartment Luke Buckham**

From my window, I watch an office building where the workers are bringing their desks onto the sidewalk. And I hope: I hope this is the final clearing out. I hope that the clocks in those walls, the ones they slide their fingers in and out of all day, are being dismantled. I hope their fingers can return, spiritually, to their hands and be reconnected to bodies in womb-water, and never get lost again in walls of buttons, coils of electric cord, and tiny guillotines.

But, soon enough, the moving trucks descend through the web of slanting streets, and men arrive with new desks, new telephones, new garbage cans, all of it looking suspiciously like the last fleet of equipment, with only a touch less patina. And new workers in new suits file in, thinking time will not touch them this time.

# One Hot Night

by Melissa Davis

She sat in the same seat and drank the same drink as always. Who was she going to take home this night, the bartender wondered. Who would be the lucky man this night? His eyes slid over the patrons with a glimmer of envy in them. He wanted to go home with her but she wanted nothing more than servitude from him.

Another regular, Tony, spotted her from across the room. Whispering to his friends of what he was going to do to her he added in his goodbye. Lucky bastard was going to hook up with her, the bartender knew by the cock in his head. It said he would have her, and in the past Tony had always got the ladies that he wanted.

She watched him approach in the mirror behind the bar. Her eyes hungrily took in his every move. Her eyes darkened before her curtains fell allowing a hint of something dangerous to show for a brief moment. But now no one knew what she thought as he slid onto the stool next to her.

Noticing her empty glass he ordered her another drink. Her slanted eyes slid to his as she gave him a sly smile of approval. "Come here often?" he asked, feeling confident.

"Always," her brows slid up as she half turned to face him. "As do you."

"If this is true,"

"It is." She slowly sipped her new drink.

"Then it's a true shame I'm just noticing you."

"Perhaps it was a blessing," her head slid to the side as she decided to play it coy. She knew that being too easy was a bad thing.

"No," he slid his body next to hers. "Tonight is the blessing dear. Come," he gently took her hand. "Allow me to show you."

Resisting she stayed in her seat. "Only if we go to my place."

A sleazy, slightly charming smile curved his lips. "Whatever makes you feel more comfortable."

She hop off her stool, brushing her body against his. "I'm always comfortable baby. That's one thing you'll learn about me." Swaying her narrow hips she decided to lead the way. Like all her other men, he followed.

Her place was cold and dark. Shadows painted every room and secrets laid heavy in the air. Tony ignored it as he walked to her room.

"Feel free to take your coat off," she slipped out of hers. He stopped when she unzipped her skirt. Sheepishly she glanced over her shoulder as she let it slid off her body. This was defiantly his type of girl, easy.

Taking off his coat he kicked off his shoes. "Where do I put it?"

“Where ever,” she laid on the bed. Head resting on hand she watched him with narrow eyes. “Mai shall get it.”

Mai? To his right he was surprise to see a small quiet woman picking up the forgotten clothes. She bowed before she took his coat. Wow, impressed he pushed up his brows. His eyes slid over her blue sun dress. Her body was much more curver but he liked his women leaned. Like...

“What is your name?” He finally sat on the bed.

“You can call me Madame White.” She crawled over to him. “For being such a lady’s man you truly are up tight.” Sitting behind him she gently massaged his shoulders. “Relax.” He closed his eyes. Her touched felt good, really good. “We’re both just here to have a good time.” She allowed her lips to caress his earlobe.

Inhaling he could fight it no longer. He wanted her. Twisting, he faced her. With a smile on her lips and a promise in her eyes she undressed him.

Bodies bare and hearts hidden it was time to start their one night together. She took control and got on top. Surprised, he let her do whatever she wanted to him. Closing his eyes he squirmed beneath her.

The pleasure started off slow, a slight tingle than it became an explosion. Her warmth and sweet scent engulf him. He wanted more. Grabbing her hips he moved her faster. Pulling her down hard on him he let out a soft moan. This girl was amazing. She knew how to work it but she was still tight as a virgin.

The pressure was building. He was going to cum. Tightening herself she stopped. She couldn’t allow him to finish until **she** was ready, and she hadn’t even started yet. His eyes flew open. What was she doing stopping? “I’m not ready,” she breathed in a low husky voice. Understanding he laid back.

Thoughts of ugly women and hot cars filled his head. The pressure subsided. Knowing it was safe she started her slow but steady movements. Her smell was intoxicating. His mouth watered for a taste. His hips moved with hers; there was no stopping him now. His fingers dug into her silky flesh as he willed her to go faster. He was hungry for her.

A secret smile met her lips. She knew it was time. She could smell the lust in his every breath. She had him. Her guard dropped as her true self started to show. Her lips thinned as her jagged teeth were revealed. She was hungry as well.

Her manicured nails were like small razors. Slowly she pushed them into the soft flesh of his stomach. Crying out his head trashed about. Going down further on him she allowed him to go deeper in her.

His cries became moans as she changed her movements. Gently she

rocked back and forth. “God,” he gasped, burying his head in the pillow. Moving more quickly now she drove her fingers inside him. She ignored his squirming body beneath her. The pleasure he was feeling chased away the pain in his gut. Keeping up with her motions he wasn’t sure what to do. Stop or continue? Scream or moan?

His body trembled as she arched her back. She was amazing. Cold blood ran down the side of his stomach as she went back in him for more.

He pushed himself into the mattress as he tried to get away. His hands hung onto her, not allowing him his escape. What the hell? His chest hurt as his heart raced. What was she doing to him?

Opening his eyes he was horrified to see the blood covering her face. Thrusting forward her body seemed to move on it’s own as she fed. Satisfied sounds came from her as she ripped another mouth full from the bloody item in her hand. Sensing his resistance she changed her motion once again. Bouncing up and down she released more of her scent.

“Oh God,” his head fell back. Images of her bloodied face filled his mind. It wasn’t real, he assured himself. It wasn’t.

Swallowing the last of his kidney she wanted more. Her stomach knotted, she needed more.

His stomach burned as his limbs cramped. This was it. Images of her beautiful twisted face filled his mind as a pained filled scream escaped his lips. Pulling out his last kidney she hungrily sunk her teeth into it. She sucked the blood off of it to quist her inhuman thirst. He tasted good, clean; the way all her men should taste.

She savored his last cries of pain as his body shut down on him. No longer needing to keep him entrapped she released her hold on him. Climbing off she was free to move where she willed and eat whatever she wished; all of his internal organs. He had been strong; healthy. Surely enough to keep her away from the bar for a couple of weeks.

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Sam watched her enter the bar. He hadn’t seen her since she had left with Tony. It had been a few weeks ago, and within that time Sam had thought about her every single day.

Confidence filled him as he watched her sit alone at the bar. I can get her. Standing, he proudly made his way to her. Her eyes stayed on him as he took his place at her side.

Drinks bought and words spoken he had won her interest. No games were played as she made it clear that she wanted, needed, to take him home. Smiling Sam followed. By the sway in her hips he knew he was in for one hot night.

# As Luck Would Have It

Ken Dean

## Chapter 1: Beginnings of Good Fortune

*Luck has been pondered upon down through the centuries. It is a fickle attribute of life and can manifest itself any way it sees fit.*

(Ken Dean 2006)

Alexander Steele's attribute of always having extraordinary good luck became even more apparent when he was fourteen, riding bikes with his friends. There was also the incident that happened three years back, but Alex didn't want to think about that. As for the present, they were riding in the local park which had several bike trails and walking paths that wound up and down throughout the park. Most of the paths were gravel-lined with some bare dirt patches showing through due to rain and erosion. Plus it was a beautiful Sunday afternoon; what could go wrong?

Alex and his friends had just taken a turn to go down one of the steeper paths that was a real sweet ride. They all began to pick up speed downhill, going as fast as possible. There was a large tree root in the middle of the path that must have been exposed at the last heavy rainfall. Alex's friends' managed to miss it while Alex must not have seen it. He hit it square on with enough force to throw him off his bike, up and forward. He was suddenly airborne and then landed on the gravel with quite a bit of momentum, enough to send him tumbling and sliding along the gravel path.

His friends realized what had happened and rushed back to see what the damage was. They gathered around Alex, who had slid to a stop at the bottom and was now standing up, brushing himself off.

Jimbo asked the obvious question; "Alex, you okay?"

"I'm fine," he responded with some frustration in his voice. That was stupid to have missed seeing that root. He stood there, brushing off his clothes, "Where's my bike?"

Jimbo noticed that Alex's clothes were torn and shredded in some areas, but he didn't see any scrapes or blood around the torn clothing.

"Alex, how come you're not all tore up? I mean, your clothes are ripped up in places, but I don't see any cuts, scrapes, or blood anywhere on you."

Damn. Why did Jimbo have to be so dumbass nosy all the time?

"Don't know, it's always been that way. I've seen other kids get hurt, cut and bleed. But it's never happened to me.

Jimbo inspected Alex's torn clothing closer, trying to find some sort of

damage. All he could see through the torn clothing was the undamaged skin of a teenage boy.

“That’s creepy, man. You should have been torn up bad.”

“Like I told you before, I’ve never been hurt or sick.”

“Then you’re damn lucky, luck like I’ve never seen before.” He responded with some disbelief in his voice.

Why did Jimbo have to be so suspicious? He had always been a little rough around the edges. His home life wasn’t that great. He had heard that his Dad was a drunk and tended to be abusive while his Mom just stood by not able or willing to do anything. She was probably afraid of getting tromped on herself. Jimbo seemed to have picked up some of the bad attitude. He could be outright cruel at times. But his home environment aside, Alex was beginning to dislike this punk. He was only a friend by association.

Larry was walking down the path with his own and Alex’s bike, which had a totally ruined front tire; all bent up.

“Here you go, man. I don’t think you’ll be riding this thing home.”

“Thanks for walking it down. Looks pretty bad.”

Larry, Stan and Phil were all standing around Alex and Jimbo now, with Larry still balancing the ruined bike while sitting on his own.

“Can I try something, Alex? I just can’t believe that you’re not cut up and bleeding.”

Jimbo asked.

“Sure, I guess.” He replied hesitantly. “What did you have in mind?”

“I just want to try something with a stick, to see if I can scratch your skin at all.”

“Go ahead; I’ve never tried it myself.”

Jimbo picked up a strong, solid stick from the edge of the path and broke off the tip to get a more ragged edge.

“Phil, grab his arm.”

Phil grabbed Alex’s arm, a little too roughly. Phil had always been a better friend of Jimbo’s and shared some of his meanness and insensitivity. Before Alex could pull away Jimbo was plunging the stick down towards Alex’s forearm. Just before it touched his skin, the stick broke into pieces and fell to the ground.

“What the hell? That stick was solid when I picked it up! It fell apart like wet bamboo!”

While Phil still had a firm hold on Alex’s arm, Jimbo plunged his hand into his pocket and produced a wicked looking pocket knife, which he quickly opened one-handed with the thumb switch. Alex was struggling to get free, but Phil kept tightening his hold. Before anyone could react he raised the knife up, the deadly sharp serrated blade glinting in the sunlight. As he had it high in the air, about to bring it down, the blade fell out of the knife onto Jimbo’s head.

“Ow! Damn it, that hurts!” Blood was slowly running down his head and



behind his ear onto his shoulder from the cut in his scalp.

Alex managed to pull free as Jimbo reached up to feel the wound.

“You freak! How did that stuff happen? The breaking stick and my knife falling apart by itself!”

He lunged towards Alex and grabbed a handful of torn shirt, and was reaching back with his arm to punch him squarely in the nose. But as his arm went back, before he could throw the punch, there was a loud crack which had a wet, sick sound.

Jimbo screamed and fell to the ground, his right forearm broken with a compound fracture. A couple of the boys felt the blood spatter against their face from Jimbo’s sudden wound. They were all staring at the grisly bone poking out through the torn skin of his arm.

All three boys were talking at once, a couple of them wiping blood from their faces.

“What the hell?”

“How did that happen?”

“Damn, his arm broke all by itself!”

Jimbo had fallen to his knees, screaming in pain. He began to throw up, and then he slowly fell sideways to the ground, passing out from the pain and shock. Alex reached down and felt Jimbo’s neck to make sure he was okay. His pulse was fast, and his wound wasn’t bleeding profusely. Probably didn’t tear an artery. But he was breathing, which was a good sign.

While Alex was still touching Jimbo’s neck, they all began to hear a siren off in the distance, getting closer. Within a few seconds, a rescue squad was coming up the service road which ran very close to the bike path. The squad stopped just opposite them. The siren silenced while the lights were still running. A blue-clad paramedic jumped out of the passenger side and came running towards them.

“Hey boys, is someone hurt here?” the paramedic shifted his gaze towards Jimbo on the ground.

“Yeah.” Alex replied. “Our friend seems to have broken his arm badly, but we’re not sure how it happened.”

“Well, it’s lucky for you guys we came along when we did. We were on a run but lost our way, and then found out it was a false call. Just about to turn around and head back for the station, but it looks like we have a patient to transport to the hospital now.”

He examined the arm for a few seconds.

“That’s a really nasty broken arm and needs to be looked at as soon as possible. I’ll head back to the squad, get our gear and bring my partner back to help.”

“Thanks, sir. We appreciate it.”

The paramedic ran back to the squad and began talking to his partner.

“Alex, what the hells going on?” Stan asked, trying to keep his voice down.

“I mean, with that stick and knife weirdness, Jimbo’s arm breaking by itself and

then this squad showing up out of nowhere just when Jimbo needed it. Not to mention you not getting hurt in what should have been a slide and grind.”

“Just lucky I guess. I mean me of course; Jimbo’s luck sure seemed to have run out.”

“Well, that’s pretty odd in itself. Your good luck at his expense.”

“You don’t know the half of it; sometimes that expense can be pretty high.”

“What?” The questioned went unanswered.

Both paramedics were running towards them with a gurney and a canvas tarp.

They left the gurney at the edge of the service road since the area was too rough to wheel the gurney across and ran to the boys with the tarp and a large equipment bag. Jimbo was beginning to stir on the ground and started to moan. The paramedics both knelt down beside Jimbo and one was giving him an injection while the other was applying some type of coagulate powder to his scalp to help stop the bleeding.

“Some morphine for the pain; when he comes fully conscious that arm is going to hurt like boiled hell. Does anyone here know his parents? We’ll be taking him to Riverside Hospital.”

Stan spoke up, “I do. I’ll give them a call right away and let them know.”

They laid the tarp down beside him, and after immobilizing the broken arm, they carefully lifted him by shoulders and ankles onto it. With Jimbo on the tarp, they lifted it up and carried him over to the gurney, strapped him on and wheeled him into the squad.

“You guys be careful; your friend will probably be just fine.”

With that they speed off with sirens back on to accompany the flashing lights.

“Why don’t we all head home.” Alex suggested. “I’ve had enough bizarre shit for one day.”

The rest of the group agreed. Alex made sure he took a different way home than the others mainly to avoid any questions the others might bring up. He was sure they were cooking up all kinds of weird stories among themselves about the events. And he was equally sure that all kinds of rumors would be spread around the high school by tomorrow about the odd events of today.

It was late when he finally arrived home and he had missed dinner. His mother had saved his in the stove in case he wanted it.

“It’s late Alex. Is everything okay?”

Then she saw his torn clothing. “My God Son, what happened to you?”

His Mother was very caring towards him, but still had a pragmatic side and just wanted to make sure he was okay. It probably came about from the fact that he was the only family she had left. He knew her love and concern for him was real and she felt that she had to be protective of him. But he felt more and more like he didn’t need protecting.

“Took a tumble down one of the bike paths. I’m fine though.”

“One of those gravel paths in park?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m just thankful you’re okay. But that’s something I never need to worry about, do I?”

You’ve been heavily blessed in your life, Alex. Never been sick a day in your life, you’ve never been hurt; not so much as a scrape or mosquito bite. And now this. By all rights, you should be torn up as hell. But of course, you’re not. I know you don’t like to think about it, and it brings up some guilt feelings for you, but this is a lot like the crash three years ago.”

No, he didn’t like to think about it! It was the night his father had been killed in a car crash but Alex had miraculously survived. His Dad had been driving him to his Aunts home to spend the night. It was dark and very stormy, with the lightning distracting with every vivid flash, and then the darkness and heavy rain would close in again. They were traveling down Spring Hill Mountain which was treacherous enough on a dry day. The road was cut out of the side of the mountain, with a rocky wall on the right and a hundred foot drop to the left. The road was like an amusement park ride; continuously curving left-right-left. Nothing to keep you from going over the edge but one of those fifty’s era guardrails.

They were just about to a spot where the road curved sharp left when the car started to slide on the wet asphalt. Alex was on the passenger side which was sliding fast towards the jagged rock wall of the mountain. Suddenly, in what seemed like a millisecond, the car was sliding in a different direction, so that the drivers’ side was headed towards the wall instead. They impacted hard; his Father never stood a chance. His head smashed through the window on impact and hit the rocks hard. He was killed instantly.

Alex had somehow wound up lying on the wet pavement, conscious. The rain was still heavy and he was instantly soaking wet. He got up quickly and flagged down a car while calling 911 on his cell. He was in shock and also realized he needed to check on his father. He rushed over to check on his him, but was almost sick at the sight. The dispatcher on the other end of the line told him to check for a pulse, which he did, but his father was already gone. He realized he was probably in shock and at the moment and not thinking clearly. He hated to think what his poor mother would go through once she found out. He needed to call her soon. He knew she would be devastated.

The occupants of the stopped car were trying to get him to sit in their car where it was dry and warm, but he told them he would rather stay with his father. He knew this would be the last bit of time he could be with him before the incoming squad would take him away forever. They said they understood and let him be, while keeping watch from their vehicle. The rain kept pouring down while he sat on a rock which was cold and wet, which kept him totally soaked while he kept watch over his father’s lifeless body. He had never been this close to someone who had suddenly died, which can have a profound effect on the average person. But also being a loved one, the effect can be horrendous, leaving a scar on ones’ psyche. He began to sob uncontrollably, his tears mixing with the

cold, persistent rain.

He heard sirens off in the distance getting closer. Within a few minutes several police cruisers, a squad and fire truck pulled up. The sirens went off while the lights kept flashing. A couple of officers were placing flares on the road to warn passing traffic while two other officers had to pull him away from his father's side and into a cruiser where they offered their sympathies but said they had to ask him some routine questions. They asked him his name and his father's name and if there were any relatives they should contact. He answered his mother and gave them their home number. He numbly continued to answer everything about the event. The officers hesitated when he came to the part about the car swerving around one hundred eighty degrees right before the impact.

"Are you sure about that, even with all the confusion of being right in the middle of a sudden accident?" one officer asked.

"Yes, I'm positive; the rock wall was coming right at my side of the car when suddenly the drivers' side of the car was heading towards it instead. I don't even remember the car swinging around."

Both officers looked at each other for a few seconds.

"Okay, that's what we'll put in the report. Listen, we're going to take you to the hospital ourselves to get checked out so you won't have to ride in the squad."

"No! I want to ride there with my father!"

"Are you sure about that, son? Sorry to be blunt, but he'll have been put in a body bag for the trip."

"Yes, I'm sure. I want to stay with him until he's taken away for good."

"Okay, we can do that. Don't really think it's a healthy thing to do, but the officer here will take you over. Brodsky, will take him over to ride in squad?"

"Sure thing, Sarge." Turning to Alex, Officer Brodsky said, "Let's go, I'll walk you over."

They stepped back out into the rain, which showed no sign of letting up. He stepped up into the back of the squad and sat down across from the black body bag. He was suddenly sick to his stomach, either from shock or being so close to his father's body again. He was able to force it back, but knew it may come back any minute.

A paramedic came to the back doors to shut them, but not before giving Alex a strange look. Screw him, it wasn't his father. They began to move down the mountain, towards Thomas Memorial Hospital downtown, named after a World War II soldier who was killed when he had jumped on and covered a live grenade to save his fellow foxhole inhabitants. Frickin' brave soldier, Alex thought.

Overcome with emotion, he had begun to sob again when he noticed that the body bag wasn't entirely zipped up. The jostling of the squads' movement had shaken his father's hand loose which was out of the bag and shaking with the vehicles movement. He mustered all his courage and reached over to put

it back in and re-zip the bag when his Father's hand suddenly lashed out and grabbed his own with a grip of steel that he couldn't break away from!

His father's body suddenly began to speak in a very loud voice, slightly muffled through the body bag.

"Alex, I want you to know that I love you and your mother very much and that will never change."

His father's hand let go of its steely grip and went limp again the instant his body finished speaking. He was too shocked to speak! His father was dead. There wasn't any way he could have survived the impact, not to mention Alex had seen first hand the damage that impact had caused. He quickly put the hand back in the bag and zipped it up so that it was fully closed. Instead of being absolutely terrified, Alex felt a wave of peace and warmth come over him. This was exactly what he had needed to hear to speed up his acceptance of the loss of his Father. How it had happened was totally lost to him until later. He didn't tell anyone what had happened in the squad except for his mother; and that was about a month after the funeral. He was afraid of not being believed or thought of as crazy.

When he told his mother about it in the kitchen one night, her eyes closed for a few minutes until he had thought she was going to pass out. But then she opened them and had a peaceful look on her face.

"Son, I believe you. And thank you for having the courage to tell me, it was exactly what I needed to hear."

Alex was still reminiscing when his mother spoke, bringing him out of the flashback.

"So you see, your luck even found a way to put give us both some closure on your father's death."

"Yeah, I understand that. But why did I turn out the way I am? I feel cursed."

"You probably feel that way now, Son. But as you get older, I'm sure you'll come to appreciate it. People would sell their souls to have what you have. And try to look on it as a gift, not a curse. The future is wide open to you. There's probably nothing that you won't be able to do."

## **Dream**

**Laine Hissett-Bonard**

Davey awoke to the sound of someone groaning, and his first soupy, waking thought was that one of the other guys had smuggled a groupie onto the tour bus again. He was ready to throw back the covers, stalk over to

Steve's bunk — because, on the rare occasions it occurred, it was *always* Steve — and pour a glass of cold water over the curtain, when the groan came again, and that time, it spoke more of pain than of an illicit sexual encounter. Davey froze, squinting into the inky darkness of his own bunk, his fist curled loosely against his sternum and his teeth tightly clenched as he attempted to discern the source of the sound.

“No, no...”

Davey lifted himself to his elbows, frowning. The voice wasn't deep enough to be Bill's, and it came from the opposite end of the bank of bunks than where Kevin and Steve were located, which left one person.

“Don't go...”

Carefully drawing his long legs from beneath the covers, Davey checked to be sure he hadn't crawled into bed naked, as he was often wont to do when he was drunk — which he certainly had been when he climbed into bed hours before — and, discovering his boxer briefs in place, he slid aside the curtain separating his bunk from the rest of the bus and slid out, maneuvering carefully to avoid knocking his head on the low ceiling of the bunk.

Moving with almost feline grace, Davey tiptoed up the short expanse of carpet to the last bunk, pausing uncertainly outside the curtain with one hand on the wall bracing his sleepy, lanky form. He stood there for several minutes, listening to the bunk's occupant draw and release slow, heavy breaths in sleep, and, certain he had dreamed the entire thing, Davey was just about to slink sheepishly back to his bunk when the sound came again, a low, pained moan that rose the fine hair on his arms.

“Noooo.... not yet...”

“Pete.” Davey's whisper sliced cleanly through the silence of the bus, and he winced, lowering the volume slightly as he drew aside the curtain and whispered his bandmate's name. “Petey? Are you okay?”

“Mmm.” Davey could barely make out Pete's shape in the dimness, but he could see just enough to determine that Pete was on his side, facing the back wall of the bunk, and appeared to be curled up into a tight ball, his long hair tied into a loose knot at the nape of his neck. He didn't move except for the measured rise and fall of his shoulder, and when he groaned again, Davey bit his lip, winced a little, and reached into the bunk to place his hand on Pete's bare shoulder, giving him a gentle shake.

“Pete.”

Pete jumped beneath Davey's hand, and Davey withdrew his arm, frowning in concern. “Who's that?” Pete whispered hoarsely.

“It's me. Davey.”

“What're you doing?” Pete rolled onto his back, turning his face toward Davey and blinking several times into the dim, diffused light leaking

through the wide opening in the curtains. His hand fell from his belly, where it rested, to land on the bed, his knuckles brushing Davey's knee.

"You were making some noise," Davey said, blushing slightly as he realized his words could easily be misconstrued. "I mean, talking in your sleep, groaning, that kind of thing. Like you were having a bad dream."

Pete yawned, sitting up slightly and rummaging behind his head until he found a crumpled pack of cigarettes beneath his pillow. "I need a smoke," he said drowsily. "I'm going outside."

Davey raised an eyebrow. "It's ten below. You're not going outside in your skivvies. Let's just go to the front of the bus and close the door so we don't wake the guys."

Nodding, Pete swung his legs out of the bunk and followed Davey toward the front of the bus, both of them taking pains to move quietly until they closed themselves into the front compartment of the bus, where Davey began rifling through the cabinets for alcohol and Pete slid into one of the bench seats next to the table, snapping his lighter and cupping his hand around the flame until the tip of his cigarette glowed in the dimness of the room, lit only by the dim fluorescent bulb over the sink.

"Time is it?"

Davey glanced at the clock over the microwave as he absently fastened a ponytail at the back of his head, effectively pinning his mass of longish, thick blond hair back from his face. "Nearly six."

"Shit." Pete yawned again, holding his cigarette between two sagging fingers. "I feel like I've only slept five minutes."

"You didn't sound like you were getting much rest," Davey said dryly, carrying two glasses of whiskey to the table and taking a seat across from Pete. The table was small and rather cramped, with barely enough room for both sets of gangly legs beneath it, and Davey's bare foot brushed over both of Pete's before he finally found a comfortable position.

Pete blew out a stream of smoke, staring down at his hands where they lay on the table in front of him, and he looked so sheepish that Davey couldn't help himself; his curiosity was nearly ready to eat a hole in him from the inside out.

"What were you dreaming about, anyway?" Davey forced it to come out casually, although he was apprehensive about asking. Ridiculous, that feeling, especially after all the years the two had known each other, but Davey was a notoriously private person, and he rarely ventured outside his shell to obtain personal information about anyone who didn't offer it up freely to begin with.

In this case, however, he simply *had* to know.

"I don't remember." Pete shrugged awkwardly, one finger pushing at a small pile of ash that had shaken free of his cigarette. "It must've been nothing."

Davey sipped his drink. "Didn't sound like nothing."

"Why are you hounding me?" Davey's eyes snapped to Pete's face at his heated exclamation, only to find Pete staring uncomfortably out the window, beyond which the first strains of faint morning light were visible just above the snow-covered horizon.

Taken aback, Davey cleared his throat, setting down his glass and lifting one hand to his mouth to gnaw at one already stubby fingernail. "I... I'm sorry. I mean... I wasn't... I'm sorry."

Pete huffed out a quick, heavy breath, expelling a cloud of smoke with it, and shook his head in obvious frustration, remaining silent as Davey's discomfort grew exponentially for every second that passed until he pushed his glass even further away and moved to slide out of the bench seat.

"I'll leave you alone," Davey said softly, damning his face for growing red again, but Pete reached out, quick as a viper, and latched onto Davey's wrist with his graceful pianist's fingers.

"Wait." Pete's pleading hazel eyes flickered to Davey's face for a bare instant before returning to the surface of the table, his hand falling away from Davey's wrist in the same moment. "You don't have to go. Unless you want to, I mean."

"Do you want me to?" Davey began to feel as if he had tripped and landed smack in the middle of an Abbott and Costello routine from hell.

Pete shook his head miserably, and Davey paused for just a moment before sliding back into his seat and picking up his glass again.

"Is there something you need to talk about?" Davey asked carefully, watching the surface of the whiskey ripple slightly with the force of his breath as he held the glass to his lips. He couldn't see Pete except in his peripheral vision, but he caught the sudden and dejected slump of Pete's shoulders all the same.

"Well." Pete stubbed out his cigarette, stubbornly refusing to look up from his ashtray, and Davey risked a glance across the table to find Pete chewing dejectedly on his lower lip, absentmindedly twisting his finger in a lock of his impossibly long, glossy brown hair where it had escaped his haphazard ponytail while he slept. "No... I guess not... I'm just sorry I snapped at you, because you didn't deserve it."

Davey sighed, reaching across the table to pick up Pete's disheveled pack of cigarettes, toying with the cellophane still clinging to the bottom of the pack. "That's what I get for prying."

Pete grinned a little, shaking his head. "You weren't prying. You were asking a question. It's my problem if that question needs an answer I'm not really comfortable giving."

Davey nodded silently, his brain racing with half-formed thoughts,



although he spoke none of them. It wasn't like Pete to be mysterious, especially not to that degree, and he had already begun imagining a scenario in which Pete received instructions from his dog on how to kill his bandmates when Pete spoke again, softer this time, but certainly loud enough for Davey to hear.

"I was dreaming about you, okay?"

Davey's fingers paused mid-crinkle, and he cautiously set the cigarette pack back on the table, meticulously centering it directly between his hands and Pete's, which lay, clasped, in front of him. Finally, he looked up, only to find Pete with his face cast downward, watching him carefully through his eyelashes, and Pete looked away immediately.

"Was I hurting you?"

Pete chuckled softly. It was hard to tell in the dim light, but Davey was nearly certain that Pete's face colored when he said, "Not exactly."

Diplomatically remaining silent, Davey took a deeper swallow of his whiskey, waiting for Pete to continue, but when he didn't, Davey found himself at a complete loss for words, unable to formulate a leading question that wouldn't seem too nosy. Instead, he swigged the remainder of his whiskey from his glass and rose abruptly, crossing the tiny space to the counter again and pouring himself a second drink.

"Need a—"

"You were—"

They both stopped speaking then, grinning uncomfortably. Davey held up the whiskey bottle, and Pete nodded, holding out his glass; he didn't say another word until Davey finished pouring his refill, but when Davey turned away to place the bottle on the counter, Pete spoke again, addressing Davey's bare back.

"You were leaving before I wanted you to go."

Davey paused, then turned back to the table, resuming his seat across from Pete, who still bore his former awkward grin. "Leaving where?" Davey asked finally, choosing his words carefully in fear of digging too deep.

"My house, or my hotel room — I'm not sure which," Pete said, his response quicker than Davey expected. "All I know is, I woke up — in the dream, I mean — and I saw you getting dressed, and I was all upset. I kept... oh, God. That's why I didn't want to tell you."

"Why?" Davey asked, frowning a little.

"Because I knew it would freak you out." Pete cursed softly under his breath, and Davey impulsively reached across the table and touched Pete's wrist, drawing his hand back immediately as if he'd been burned.

"I'm not freaked out. I'm... curious. That's all. What... what was I doing there in the first place?"

There was no denying Pete's flush that time, and he shook his head in resignation before he answered a long moment later. "I guess... the impres-

sion I got was that you slept there. With, um... with me.”

Davey swallowed a mouthful of whiskey and coughed once, dryly. “Yeah.”

Pete nodded miserably, refusing to look at him. He reached for his pack of cigarettes again, but glanced up sharply when he found Davey’s hands already there, his eyes meeting Davey’s in the split second their fingers touched before they both drew back, the awkwardness between them intensifying.

“Can I ask a kind of personal question?” Davey said finally, draining his second drink and swirling the last few drops around in the bottom of the glass.

Pete grunted a little, nodding, and Davey nodded in return.

“Was it the first time — not, like, in that dream, but... have you... uh...”

Grinning, Pete finished the thought for him. “Have I had the dream before?” His face burning, Davey merely nodded.

Pete shrugged, smiling shyly. “Well... actually... yeah. And sometimes you leave, but... a lot of times, you stay.”

“And then what happens?” Davey’s eyes widened when he realized he’d spoken aloud.

Pete moved his foot under the table, his toes accidentally brushing Davey’s, but neither of them moved. “Sometimes I wake up,” he said softly, finally meeting and holding Davey’s gaze, “but sometimes the dream just keeps going, and... well...”

Davey felt a smile beginning to twitch at the corners of his lips, and he reached across the table again, this time brushing aside the crumpled cigarette pack and reaching for Pete’s hand. “You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to,” he said quietly, moving his foot closer still to Pete’s. “But I think I’d like to hear it if you do.”

Pete’s eyes widened, and he reached for his glass, draining it abruptly and setting it down on the table with a loud thump. “R-right now? Here?”

Biting his lip thoughtfully, Davey shook his head, sliding out of the bench seat and extending a hand to Pete, who stared at it in disbelief for just a second before accepting it and allowing Davey to help him to his feet. “No, I’m getting tired again. I was thinking I’d go lie down for a while.”

Their fingers remained laced between them as they stood there in the tiny kitchenette of the tour bus, staring at each other in the dim lighting, but before Pete even had a chance to respond, Davey could see the answer in his eyes already, and merely flashed him a shy smile, turning back toward the bunk area and quietly sliding open the door.

“Would you do me a favor?” Pete’s whisper barely carried across the scant space between them, but Davey turned back, his brow creasing slightly.

“Yeah?”

Pete’s smile was wary but tinged with hope as he tightened his grip on Davey’s fingers. “Just tell me I’m not dreaming again.”

**part 9 (the January 2007 installment) of**  
**THE DRIVE**  
**Kenneth DiMaggio**

There were still some great ruins and monuments though, and while we had no trouble finding the former, we were not able to locate the latter.

Neither could her patience wait for the latter.

“Do you know where you’re going?” she asked in a mock nonchalant tone, which also had a tiny coating of acid.

I wistfully smiled.

“Come on,” I wryly pleaded. “I’ve been lucky in not knowing the answer to that question for maybe ten years, maybe more. But in terms of getting around the industrial tundra; in knowing my way around the wastescape, well, you just drive, and eventually you will come to some form of understanding.”

“Or an epitaph,” The Young Artist said.

“True,” I said as I slowly nodded. “True.”

“We can look for the church later,” The Young Artist said. “One of my friends in design class also wants to see it.”

“No, I want to find it too; you see, there’s this window—and if you catch it at the right time, it blossoms like a fire.”

“Look, if you start doing some weird drugs or just stuff that’s weird, I’m getting out.”

I softly laughed.

“It’s not like that,” I said. “In fact...I’m taking you to some place that you’ll only find here in this city—but something just as beautiful as anything you’ll see in Paris.

“Is this something like finding your ‘inner vision’?” she snidely said.

“Wise ass,” I said.

“What’s that? Didn’t quite hear you,” she said, when she obviously did.

“Negative Capability,” I said. “You want to find that cathedral? Enter through the hands of the neckless Wop or Polack who helped to build it on days off he could never afford to take with a family to feed and a third floor railroad flat rent to pay while his wife was trying to do the same. And why one of them made a stained glass window that looks like a flower about to burst into a fire? You have to see the last thing that that immigrant saw before he or she died—and don’t ask me what I’m talking about—because I’m a little fucking crazy.”

She just stared at me without expression, then closed her eyes, giggled, and quickly reached over and took one of my toys that I had on my dashboard.

“Hey!” I said. “That was my—“

I made a quick recounting of what was still on the dashboard. My rubber rat, my plastic snake, my silver zippo lighter (not because I smoked ((outside of the Whacki Tabaci)); I never used this palm size polished piece of chrome; it just

looked cool in a macho, cowboy, fugitive, and outlaw sense, and every guy has to have one guy-thing about himself lying around in plain show off-y view.

So my rubber rat, my plastic snake, and my silver Zippo lighter were all there.

—But not my miniature, paper mache, hand-painted Mexican Day of the Dead skull.

“Hey...you took my Mexican Day of the Dead skull...!”

She giggled.

“That’s hand crafted! I want it back!”

She just shook her head no.

“What do you mean ‘no’? I want it back.”

She flicked her head away from me and looked out the window at the passing waste-scape. As if she could sense what I was thinking, she put the skull in her bag and then folded her arms. The hell, and what was worse, I was starting to admire her audacity too. Again that extra sensory perception of hers, because she crossed her arms and hunched towards the window, so that I could not take something loosely dangling from the Goth-ware on her bag. I also had to drive, and keep at least one eye on the road even if there was no one on it. There were few people outside these clapboard lined streets after the brick castle like grammar school a few blocks away began its day. The only people left behind in these houses, were a few single mothers caring for the pre school kids while doing telemarketing from their railroad flats, and some retired immigrant oldsters who got around with walkers, or did not get around at all. Where was the rest of the world? Especially the vital, the young, the creative? I was still trying to find that out myself, and was I sure that it was in New York? There you would always find some inspiration, but vitality? Sounds reactionary, revisionist, a betrayal; sorry, but my “Negative Capability” could never let me lose myself into a shallow mid-brow Broadway play and whatever its latest theme was. As for that fancy term, *Negative Capability*? A verbal hangover from undergraduate days. One of the few useful things I remember from my college education. Keats and his vale of soul making. Entering a room full of children—and becoming those children. Damn, that was a powerful letter. Must have read that one and a few others like it a dozen or more times. I read all of his letters. His, and Rilke’s—“The Letters to a Young Poet.” Dig deep into yourself. Ask yourself why you must write. I ask it every day, and every-day the same answer. A roomful of children. At least that is how I try to leave myself and enter into one of these three story porch fronted houses with a banged up Detroit battle-wagon like mine parked in front. And so I enter one of these railroad flat rooms, hoping to find creativity, curiosity, imagination. But when I find an oxygen tank, a disintegrating tabloid page turning Visiting Nurse, and a semi conscious bed ridden former factory worker born on the Steppes, and who has already begun his death rattle in the brick rust tundra, well...I have learned to find a lot of creativity and imagination in decay and death. At least there are no false illusions. Deterioration brings with it an ironic sense of growth.

It still does not make entering these time dead tenements easy. But this is what I am the poet of. This is my post. The artist on deathwatch. And so old

Ivan, old Ivonova, do you want to tell a last fragment of your immigrant industrial narrative before your soul goes back to your old country soil? No? your soul cannot go back there? Is what your silence tells me.

But can your soul find harmony on your long adopted soil? That is now covered with neon-junk food franchises and anonymous bunker like public storage spaces.

So, are you ready to enter into one of the best vales of dead soul making I have to offer? A mock cathedral?

The thought was directed to The Young Artist. She would soon hear it and turn around. Like me, she was an artist—which meant that she was sensitive to the most weirdest shit. Which meant that she had “psychic” antenna always tuning into the weirdest signals. Which meant that besides being spiritual, psychical, and all that other fun stuff, she was also selfish, sarcastic, obnoxious and lost in her world. But only because it was a better world. I smiled the same time she turned around. She softly, shyly smiled back—the freshman in college, was now a freshman in high school, even younger.

“Hey—Goddamn it!”

The little thief just swiped my Zippo lighter from off of the dashboard.

“You’re not taking that!”

She flicked the top case back, and started flicking the tiny wheel that should have produced a yellow flicker kiss with a blue tongue in it.

“It’s out of fuel,” she said. “Not even that. It doesn’t even have a wick. You never used it before!”

She turned to me, demanding explanation.

“It doesn’t matter—now give it back!”

“Not until you tell me why you have it! You don’t smoke—outside of your drug addiction.”

“I’m not a drug addict,” I said. “I just need to escape from reality and to run away from my problems once in awhile. Now gimme back my lighter.”

“No.”

She was not going to give it back, either. Until I told her why I kept it.

“I keep it because it looks mean on the dashboard.”

“Here, take it back, before someone sees me with it and I get really embarrassed.”

She threw it back on the dashboard.

“Just let me know before you go frolicking. I’d hate—“

“Ha, ha,” she mockingly interrupted. “As if I don’t get that all the time. But don’t worry. I’m really a good thief.”

“I know,” I said.

“I’m not kidding. Let me show ya.”

“In a few minutes, because first I want to show you...”

Something that she might enjoy. An isolated fenced off cemetery on a hill. ‘Though as you passed it from the street, you could not see a tomb: only a black arched gate with the welded on letters: “Old St. Mary’s” As you drove up the hill, an isolated, tilted Celtic cross gravestone made an eerie greeting.

As you glanced to your right, similar crooked, isolated crosses began to appear. Hanging like bridge cables from their second and third story back porches were clotheslines that often had large sheet-size patches pinned from them. Day in, decade out, it seemed to be the same pale, platoon of shrouds wheeled out to a large steel pole in a fenced off backyard.

Once we got out of the car, behold a small blue collar valley columned by tenements with porches rising with each story. The streets that held these squat, wide shouldered, block like houses seemed to be pushing them along like a squad of marching construction workers. Cars were parked in front of lawns crowned with plastic statues of the Virgin Mary; statues sheltered by a cut away half bath tub. The cars were dented but still sturdy like old steel boxy lunch pails. And where this rising tin and clapboard valley peaked: a clay brown plateau. Planted firmly on top of it was a large brick factory-like orphanage or a stark power plant with tall arched windows.

Beyond that was a horizon that was always dull gray like some old samovar or heirloom, that if it could just get a little polish...

There was nothing special about these old tenements and cars that were in slightly better condition than my own. From this hilly cemetery, however, it was like looking at a pie shaped piece of blue collar America as Edward Hopper or some thirties W.P.A. muralist might have painted it; a perspective criss-crossed with clotheslines, in-pasto'd with clapboard, framed by smoke stacks. And crowned with the gold onion dome of an Orthodox church. But the perspective was also slightly askew and deceiving, so that the tenements seemed to blur into each other like the beginning stages of a cubist painting. Or an image that was peeling, fading, vanishing.

After we parked under the tree, one thing was solid and clear: the gray, twin towered church that looked a lot like a famous one in Paris.

"Notre Dame!" the Young Artist excitedly said as she pointed to it.

"No, Sacred Heart," I said, and smiled.

"It does look like the Cathedral in Paris—but smaller," The Young Artist said. "And those old houses and streets down there—they look like they're being squeezed through the neck of an hour glass. Look—towards the bottom of the hill, there's only one house—actually, half a house, because the street cuts it off."

"This is the last of that glass," I said. "There is no more time left. Once all these houses go dark,"

I made a sudden sweeping motion with my hand.

"That's it. Finished."

"That's rather selfish," The Young Artist said. "What about if new people want to move in? Or haven't you noticed?"

I softly smiled and nodded.

"I have. But I find more life in what I call, 'the last Sun'. Come the end of the day, and comes the end of a vital and robust culture. But until then, there is the race, the intensity, the *fever* to capture as much of it as you can with words, with paint, with whatever is your medium."

I suddenly turned to her, and without fully realizing it, grabbed her forearm.

“You should be up here when the sun goes down! Let’s come back. Before the sun dies! When everything is purple and blue like gasoline and oil sailing on a puddle! It’s like a flower! A flower in its last stages of dying!”

She burst out laughing while yanking her arm away, and then covered her mouth with her hand in an attempt to control her laughter.

“I’m sorry—I don’t mean to laugh—that’s really poetic—but the way you got so carried away.”

I looked down and muttered:

“I know...”

“No, it’s really sweet—“

Ouch.

“It is, I want to come back here tonight—but right now, I can’t see your inspiration. I’m sorry.”

I shoved my hands in my pockets, and started digging the ground with my foot.

“We’re artists,” I said with embarrassment. “We see things differently from everyone else.”

She gently touched my arm.

“I know,” she said. “We do see things differently.”

“Let me show what I mean,” I responded

I went to the tree, picked up a small rock, and started digging out a small area between two of this tree’s exposed, dried up, leathery roots.

“What are you doing.”

Without turning to her, and while continuing my dig, I explained:

“A friend and I—we earlier came up here. And—because of the great time we had, we each buried something special here, and we promised to leave them here until there was a special reason to dig them up, and now is one of those times.”

“May-be,” she said, “but I’m not digging up anything at a cemetery.”

“It’s okay. It’s just a little clay thing that we made at the diner—“

She now pinched my shoulder.

“Ouch,” I tried to playfully pass off.

“I bet you it was play-doh,” she said.

“How’d you know?”

She began to pull me forward by arm.

“Come on,” she said.

“Wait!” I said, and without quite knowing why, I suddenly pulled away, and walked quickly forward—walked quickly toward that—slice of blue collar America which made a sudden sensuous image—as if I was seventeen or twenty years old—out of school for the first time—or out of the service—whenever these streets had a sense of the wild, the reckless, the hell raising—and just as there was a church, a factory, a tenement, there was also a tavern with a long mahogany counter and candy colored GTOs or Cameros with the girls that you were about to make a little wild, reckless, and hell raising with! There was still time—wasn’t there? Yes! There was still youth, there was still promise, there was still imagination—oh! Blessed, blessed, blessed imagination!

I was not completely “lost”. Part of me was still in that previous dimension—the one where there was some one justifiably angry for the way I suddenly left and so I slowly turned around and tried to explain—but the only thing could say was:

“It’s so beautiful—it’s just so beautiful!”

She slowly shook her head yes the way you would someone who is slightly—never mind.

“There’s still time!” is how I next tried to explain it.

“Of course there is,” she said. “And maybe I should drive.”

I now noticed that she had been walking me to the car.

“No, I’ll be alright, I promise that I’ll stay in this dimension.”

“That’s—important,” she said . “But you have to take me to where I want to go—let me show you something.”

“No problem,” I said. “Where do you want to go?”

“The mall,” she said.

Pow! Right in my sensitive artistic nature! The mall? Asking me to take her there was like asking a dedicated alcoholic to take you to an AA meeting.

“Why the hell would you want to go to the mall?” I asked.

“To shoplift,” she said. “Now get in the car.”

I briefly hesitated. Well, if this was what she wanted to show me, okay. And so I got back into the car, but without taking a final look at what was left of a piece of landscape that began like a painting or story that spoke back to me. I was actually—in shock. What else could it be? Because—the mall? What the hell did the mall have to say? Well, actually, the mall had a lot of stuff to say. The mall had more to say about present day America than the poetry of a great poet like Walt Whitman (though I feel that Walt would have a lot to angrily declaim about the way democracy has shrunk between the aisles in J.C. Penny’s and Macy’s.) Yeah, the mall could be inspirational. But after any aborted reverie of the wild and raw beauty of taproom sawdust, soul’d America, I found it hard to make a spiritual transition to a giant refrigeration unit where Thorazine, Prozac, and other anti depressants were re-transfigured into a gaseous substance, and filtered out through the air ducts, unbeknown to the democratic consumer rabble.

“You’ve never shoplifted before, have you.”

Maybe if I have, I might have a different perspective on the mall.

“Have you ever been in—no, why would you be in jail, when you haven’t even gotten a parking ticket.”

“Hey, I have been in jail!”

“Oh, so you did have a parking ticket. And enough of them that you did not pay.”

“I—“

Better not, and I hope it was not too late.

“What? You went on a tour with your high school Scared Straight program? With one of the prisoners calling you a punk?”

Fuck it, you’ll only embarrass yourself now if you don’t forcefully say it.

“I went there to do a feature story for my college newspaper.”

“No! You’re kidding! Stop the car right now and let me out!”



She even grabbed the door handle too.

Too bad she had no intention of doing it.

"The same newspaper for which I got to fly in a small Cessna state Police traffic spotting plane," I said, and then smiled.

"Wow..." she said. But there was a trace of resentment in her voice.

"The same newspaper for which I got to do a feature story on an old carnny freak show, which had a two-headed pig fetus and mummified baby in sealed glass jars."

"Fuck you!" she said.

I knew that would get her.

"Do you want to go shoplifting or not?" she asked with a trace of resentment in her voice

"I—I don't know now," I said. "So go ahead and laugh."

"I'm not laughing," she said.

She was not being mocking or sarcastic. Feeling a little more bold, I announced:

"I don't want to get caught!"

"You won't get caught," she said. She sounded annoyed. "Shoplift, burglarize, kidnap, I've done it all except murder."

"Well, glad to hear that you have not done the last—when it comes to taking a life, I philosophically weigh in like a Buddhist: I abhor the thought of even stepping on a worm. It's still a life, and it's a more noble life than many of the people in politics today, and no one is stepping on *them*, damn it. But—kidnapping?"

She sighed.

"Okay, I sorta exaggerated. It's not what you think. It was more like a high school prank. Me and a bunch of friends forced this nerdy girl into the car and brought her to the woods, where we pretended we were going to sacrifice her to Satan."

Nerdy girl, ha? No, you were not kidnapping her, just traumatizing her for life.

"Happen to you, ha?"

"No," I quickly said.

"Come on," she gently coaxed. "It's okay. And I can tell your eyes are just like hers when we threatened to put her in the trunk."

"You put her in the trunk?"

"No, because she stopped whining and got in the back seat like she was told."

A pause, and then she asked:

"Did they threaten to put you in the back trunk?"

"Yes, but—I stopped whining like your friend."

She giggled and then asked:

"And what was your little torture about?"

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# children churches & daddies

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