

# CHILDREN, CHURCHES & DADDIES

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## Scars Art

3, 6, 9, 16, 22. Cover art of the  
Viet Nam wall, photographed in  
Washington, D.C.

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## He's An Escapist

a haiku from  
Janet Kuypers

he's an escapist  
from his wife, kids, the business  
and fled by drinking

## If I Did It: Justifying the Morally Reprehensible

My grandmother died when I was 19... I was away at college, and I heard from my sister that she had been going to the doctor because she had abdomen pain, and the doctor told her that she had a yeast infection. My widowed grandmother in her eighties knew what a yeast infection was like, and knew this wasn't it. So she tried to tell the doctor this, but he made his mind up and sent her home. A day or two later my grandmother was in the hospital, because of a stomach problem, and she died in the hospital two days later.

And after my grandmother passed away, people asked if we were going to sue the doctor for his negligence, which probably contributed in some way to her death. And we thought no, we don't want to deal with that hassle... And a part of me was going to tell you the story about my grandmother's passing through the eyes of the doctor, you know, to say that maybe he intended to do this to my grandmother, but even if we thought he did, he could write an account how he *would* have done my grandmother in, *if* that was something he'd actually do.

But then again, we assume that this doctor wasn't intentionally trying to hurt a patient, but had the generic stereotype in his head that this was an old woman who didn't know better, so he'd tell her something to satiate her.

Oh, you know, that's a bad example of my point. Let me think of another story... Wait, I was an acquaintance rape workshop facilitator for years, and I ran seminars about stopping sexism and rape in our communities... I can think of a story where a woman went to one of our seminars asking about what she could do to report a rape, even if not to the police. We told her that she could report it to the school board before she calmly told us she was raped six days earlier. And I thought about how calm she was, in the public setting, talking about being raped and wanting to do something about it, not falling apart, and I wondered about the mentality of the man who did this to her — was he a friend? Or did he live in the dorm near her? Or was he in a fraternity and she went to a new semes-

ter party and everyone was drinking?

Wait... I can't really imagine the rapist, so I can't elaborate on his intentions. I *could* tell you about a woman I know who was raped on her second day of college, by a man whom she had once dated and was (not seriously) starting to date again. He raped her in her own college dorm, with her own roommate passed out asleep in the bed next to her. From what I know, the man came to their dorm room, and he brought alcohol to two girls who didn't drink before. He seemed to be pushing more liquor on his old girlfriend's roommate; the victim (or "survivor," as we were trained to refer to women who have survived a rape) thought at the time it was strange that he was trying to get her roommate more drunk. Well, both of the roommates were drunk by the end of the night, and the girls' roommate literally passed out on her twin-sized bed. The still-conscious ex-girlfriend was probably conscious enough to do something about him having sex with her; she even remembered telling her therapist that she even happened to have a condom as a gift from someone else, and she told him to put it on (that she thought that it should at least be protected sex, if he was going to have sex with her and she didn't — or couldn't — push him away). She wondered after the fact if her telling him to use a condom made the act a legal act of consenting sex, but then her therapist told her that his pushing alcohol — especially on her roommate so she would be passed out — made this an act he used foresight before attacking her, and she was not at fault.

Well, I can't legally jump to conclusions about the act or rape in this case (though I can say as a facilitator that if she *felt* rape after these circumstances, then from her perspective it was rape), but since I know something a little more about the rapist, I can do my best to tell this story from his perspective. You know, if *he* were to write a book after saying he didn't rape her, about how he *would* have raped her, *if* he raped her.

“You see, I was in college for a year, and when you get away for your parent's house and their strict rules, you're able to have sex with people and not have a problem. And my girlfriend, well, we broke up when I went away to college that first year, but when I came back for the summer I started dating her again, and thought we could be together more intimately once we both go to college together. So when my girl and her roommate got into town and college started, I brought the liquor for them (they wouldn't know where to get it on their first day in town for college), and I gave them drinks. So I was able to be with my girl



that first night she was in town, and that was cool. But it was funny, she didn't spend much time with me after that, her and her roommate had people from high school over a few nights later, and she was talking with other people, and me and my roommate spent the night at their dorm (with two twin-sized beds), and my girl even stayed in one bed with her roommate and another guy. I mean, we were all dressed, trying to sleep, but I was in a chair, and my roommate came to the get-together with me and he was in a chair too, trying to sleep. So yeah, it was weird, and like a week or two later, my girl said she didn't want to see me anymore, even though I tried to be there for her."

Hey, that wasn't a bad story. And it seems really reasonable. But what would he have said if the world thought he was a rapist for a long time, say, over ten or 15 years? Let's see what we can come up with for him...

"You know, everyone's listening to her side of the story, so everyone thinks I did it. And you know. I only wanted that girl to be happy. I did my best for her. But you know, if I *were* to rape her, this is how I would have done it. I would be nice to her all summer, because I can get any girl I want in college, but I wanted to be able to have her once she got to college. Well, I'd try to butter her up and make her happy to be with me (hopefully she wouldn't realize that she could have any guy she wanted when she got to college, 'cause she's hot). So when they'd get to college, I'd offer to come over to welcome them in, with lots of liquor. It'll be easier to get her if I got her really drunk, which should be easy since she doesn't drink. And her roommate doesn't drink either, so I'll work on getting her roommate *really* drunk, so she'll pass out and leave us alone. Then I'd be with my girl and we'd be able to have sex, no problem.

It's not any harder than that. What more do I need to say?"

Okay, that wasn't too hard. Even if what he *did* could be considered rape, it's pretty easy to come up with him telling a story like this. I mean, I'm an acquaintance rape workshop facilitator, and I was able to come up with that. Think of how easy it would be for the perpetrator of the crime to write the accounts down in a story, say they didn't do it, and still be able to outline their crime in detail.

It's easy.

It might seem like an insane thing to do, but it's easy.

”””

Now think of that insanity, and place it not on someone who has raped someone, but on someone who has killed someone. Or better yet, place it on someone who has killed *two* people. The murderer might have had enough money to get an insanely good lawyer (insanity needs insanity to save itself, doesn't it?), so that they wouldn't be convicted of the murders. Even if a civil suit holds them liable, they can hire expensive lawyers to save them from having to pay money to the families of the two people they've killed (I mean, why should they have to pay money for the grief of the families of the people they've murdered? I mean, they weren't *convicted* of committing the murders...).

But the thing is, I think I've sort of shown that even from an acquaintance rape workshop facilitator's point of view, it's not that hard to tell the story of "if I did it" from the perspective of someone who has actually committed the crime.

Although I'd have to say that I'd have to think that anyone who didn't commit the crime (like, if someone didn't kill their ex-wife and another man), they would never be able to tell a "hypothetical" story of what the crime would have been like if they actually did kill people. I mean, let the dead rest. Give some people some peace *somehow* (even if it's not by paying the money that's owed to the families of the victims).

”””

In the 11/27/06 issue of *Newsweek*, Mark Miller, Andrew Murr and Weston Kosova reported that Judith Regan's imprint at HarperCollins was "set to publish a "fictional" account by O.J. that details how he would have killed Nicole Simpson and Ron Goldman if he did kill them, which he still insists he did not." The book is titled "If I Did It," and was originally scheduled to appear with a two-part interview on the Fox network (it's funny, Yahoo! news even reported that "Fox is a subsidiary of News Corp., which also owns Regan Books" — which means that the same company owns FOX broadcasting and the book publishing group, so it's a double-whammy for the master company, to have its television stations advertise it's book release during sweeps month...).

The Huffington Post even agreed with *Newsweek* by reporting in an AP article by Paul J. Gough that the interview that was supposed to air on Fox was "conducted by editor and book publisher Judith Regan." No, *that* won't be a slanted interview to sell more books...

(And when there was such a backlash against this book and televised interview, Regan continued to state that the reason she did this was to (A) try to get Simpson to confess, and (B) come to terms with the own sexual

violence she had experienced in her own life. That and she swears left and right that she didn't pay him for the book — but I'm sure she probably paid something like "O.J. Simpson Inc." which would eventually get all of the money to him anyway...)

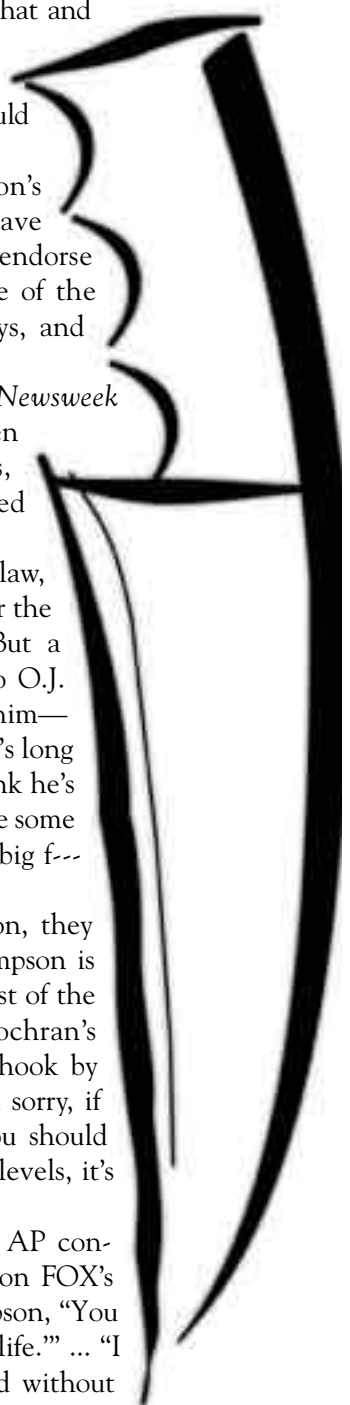
But to increase book size and sales, Simpson's lawyer Yale Galanter (who claims to not have known about this book deal and would never endorse doing it) even told *Newsweek* that "Only one of the seven chapters deals with the murder, he says, and nowhere does O.J. admit to killing anyone."

...And what I even found funny was that *Newsweek* reported that "as if to remind us that the burden of irony rests lighter on some than on others, Geraldo Rivera himself got on TV and railed against the evils of exploiting the victims."

In doing this, Simpson doesn't fear the law, because Simpson can't be tried a second time for the crime. And *Newsweek* even reported that "But a Simpson family friend, who like many close to O.J. did not want to be named for fear of alienating him—says that money wasn't his only motivation. "He's long past caring at this point," the friend says. "I think he's saying, 'You think I did it anyway, so let me make some money off of what you think.' This is just one big f--- you from him."".

Interesting, money isn't his only motivation, they say... and it's interesting that the murderer Simpson is trying to give the world a big fuck you to the rest of the world (those who saw past Johnnie Cochran's "Chewbacca defense," which got him off the hook by confusing people into believe anything — and sorry, if you won't know the "Chewbacca defense," you should watch *South Park* more often). On some moral levels, it's a shame that he has the right to give it.

I even saw that Fox News reported (with AP contributing to their story) that "In a video clip on FOX's Web site, an off-screen interviewer says to Simpson, "You wrote 'I have never seen so much blood in my life.'" ... "I don't think any two people could be murdered without



everybody being covered in blood,” Simpson responds.”

Simpson now lives in Florida, which is probably because this way he doesn't have to live in the same state as the people expecting \$33.5 million from Simpson (you know, to make his money more unattainable). Because he hasn't been able to get much work since the trial of the century (as it has been known to be called), Simpson now is forced to live on his \$300,000 pension from the NFL (which is also money the Goldman and Brown families can't touch to get their payment of what O. J. owes). *Star Tribune* in Minneapolis St. Paul even put it clearly: “Simpson has failed to pay the \$33.5 million judgment against him in the civil case. His NFL pension and his Florida home cannot legally be seized. He and the families of the victims have wrangled over the money in court for years.” And Laurie Levenson, a Loyola University law school professor and former federal prosecutor who has followed the case closely, even said to the *Star Tribune*, “He can write pretty much whatever he wants. Unless he's confessing to killing somebody else, he can probably do this with impunity.”

The *New York Daily News'* Michelle Caruso (the *Daily News'* West Coast Bureau Chief) even let us know some opinions from family members of the deceased on this... “Lou Brown, the father of murder victim Nicole Brown Simpson, said he wasn't shocked to hear his ex-son-in-law was exploiting the tragedy. “I gave up on him many years ago,” Brown, 83” said to the *New York Daily News*. “As for Simpson's book title, Brown said he has “absolutely no doubt” Simpson killed his daughter.” And the Goldman's lawyer, Jonathan Polak “said he would explore legal action to get money from Simpson if he profits from the book and TV deal.”

Now, I know that Fox was the group that decided to take up this interview and book. And I know that after the outrage that the media broadcast about this project, Fox decided to stop the book and interview (I mean, they thought it was a good idea in sweeps month... and they forgot the American people might have a conscious after all...). But the *Star Tribune* even pointed out that ““This is not a project appropriate for our network,” said Rebecca Marks, a spokeswoman for the entertainment division of NBC, a network that once employed Simpson as a football analyst.” And granted, CBS said it was unaware of any pitch for the project, but it's good to know (I think) that NBC, who had O.J. as a hot for football shows, wouldn't touch this tiger with a ten-foot pole (want to know why I like NBC sometimes? Check out my article that was published at USA Today about NBC not succumbing to television guidelines and restrictions the way the government wanted them to do it...).

And you know, I have to quote a few other places here, because some-



one made the *best* comment known to mankind when they wrote about this whole fiasco... Tony Hicks, who is a Music Critic at the *Contra Costa Times* and also runs a show on *A&E*), who wrote that this book would “describe how, IF he killed his wife and her friend, he would’ve done it. Which of course, he did. I mean, he didn’t. Which we all know, since the legal system in the United States doesn’t make mistakes. ... So because he’s not getting much attention these days, and Leslie Nielsen still won’t return his phone calls, and he still can’t find the real killer, he” thinks that it would be a good idea to “hypothesize” about what the murder would have been like if *he* had killed them.

Tim Murphy of the *Chicago Maroon* even wrote in the aptly-titled “If I reviewed O.J.’s book, here is how it would go,” that “the consummate American renaissance man, Simpson has met success along every road that he has traveled in life. From the gridirons of his youth, to silver screen spoofs *Airplane* and *Naked Gun*, to double homicide and a Los Angeles courtroom, his record is impeccable.”

And if you can’t remember the heinousness of these two murders in 1994, Johnette Howard, a sports columnist for the *News Day*, reminded us of “how Nicole Brown was nearly decapitated by her killer in a single stroke or Goldman absorbed 47 stab wounds as he fought for his life.” You want spookiness in details and story telling? “Testimony indicated that Simpson had been stalking Nicole for weeks and had bought a long knife at the store shortly before the murders. The scores of highly stylized knives on display had exaggerated saw-toothed blades and names like *The Raptor*, *Fury*, *First Blood*, and *Rambo II*. This was no tony housewares place that peddled kitchen utensils. This was a gangbanger’s supply shop in a worn part of the city that also sold imitation Glock handguns, brass knuckles and martial arts weapons.” Hearing information like this makes it impossible to think that O.J. Simpson could have really gotten off on the charges — especially when supported by so much DNA evidence.

””

So yeah, after all of this nonsense, and after every cable news station broadcasting anything lambasting the book publisher and broadcasting center that would release this (although people *would* watch the interview, even if it is just O.J.’s contrived fake answer to something that isn’t real, it *would* be fascinating to watch the free spectacle versus pay for a book...), a few people would publicly admit that if nothing else, they could turn it on and watch it for a few minutes before turning it off disgustedly. You know, just so they could stand around the water cooler the next morning and say, ‘Yeah, I *did* have it on for a few minutes, but then I had to turn it off...’

Well, after all of this nonsense, Fox News decided to cancel the book and interview they were broadcasting (since they owned both outlets, one was a broadcast medium for the other, what a great system...). In their formal statement in New York: "News Corp., the parent company of book publisher HarperCollins and the FOX network, has canceled publication of the O.J. Simpson book and television special "If I Did It." ... "I and senior management agree with the American public that this was an ill-considered project," News Corp. Chairman Rupert Murdoch said. "We are sorry for any pain that this has caused the families of Ron Goldman and Nicole Brown Simpson.""

”””

My brother-in-law was just online days after the decision was made to not publish the book and release the mock interview, and he saw that on ebay, a 'black market' copy of the O. J. Simpson book was available for bidding, and the highest bid (so far, with over eight days left to the bidding war and before ebay could pull the tasteless and illegal listing from their site) was over \$20,000. Now, someone's probably making a lot of money for a book they probably don't have, but as long as the one hosting the bid is out of the country, ebay can't do a thing other than pull the listing, otherwise someone will eventually be out of a lot of money.

You know, maybe I should write a book and sell it print-on-demand about all of this, and advertise it like mad on ebay. Because it is all about the money, so why not?

But more importantly, maybe I should send an email to O. J. Simpson (or O. J. Simpson, Inc., or whatever) and offer to release the book for him. I mean, I'd never buy the book, but if I had to design it and give it an ISBN number and release it for sale on the Internet, I'd get a copy for part of the design work. Think it's an awful idea? Well, is some schmuck would by a black market copy for so much money, you can't say everyone in this country is above the Simpson insanity. It's like wanting to drive by an accident real slowly, you can't help but stare. It's in our nature.



*Janet Kuypers*®  
Janet Kuypers  
Editor in Chief

## Fall of the wall

Beijing

China is getting tough on people who steal dirt or bricks from the Great Wall. Over the past 2,000 years, the wall has been mended many times. But in the past few decades it's been eroding significantly, partly because of human destruction. Last week, for example, three people were caught using bulldozers to carve tons of dirt out of the wall for use in a landfill. Under the new, stricter laws, such transgressors can be fined up to 500,000 yuan (\$62,500) or jailed for up to 10 years. Only a small portion of the 4,000-mile-long wall is open to tourists.



## Renovating Auschwitz

Oswiecim, Poland

The International Auschwitz Council agreed this week to renovate parts of the infamous Nazi death camp. Until now, the site had been kept just as it was when the Allies liberated the camp at the end of World War II. But more than 60 years later, two of the gas chambers are sinking into the ground.

“We have to preserve without reconstruction,” said Piotr Cywinski, director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. “We must decide to do this if we want to be able to see these gas chambers in 20 years.” The council, made up of Holocaust survivors, academics, and religious leaders, also recommended modernizing the museum exhibitions at the site.



## NASA's big plans

Washington, D.C.



NASA this week announced plans to build a permanent base on the moon by 2024—raising the prospect of a manned space flight to Mars.

The ambitious proposals mark a radical departure from previous short trips to the moon. The base would be permanently staffed by 2024, and once complete, astronauts from the U.S. and other nations would spend up to six months at a time there. NASA said it wants the base to prepare for a manned mission to Mars, and ultimately, exploration of other planets.

“The lunar base will be a central theme in our plan for going to the moon in preparation to go to Mars and beyond,” said NASA's Scott Horowitz. “It's a very, very big decision.”



# THEY ARE LISTENING

Mel Waldman

They are listening. But why? I am merely a poet/writer.  
I am also a proud American and a patriot. And yet I know.  
They are listening.

Last night, I read the New York Times article:  
“House Approves Power for Wiretaps Without Warrants.”  
If this surveillance bill is passed...  
Wiretaps without warrants for 90 days.

They are listening.  
I know.  
They are listening.

Yet who am I? An obscure writer and nothing more.  
I’ve written “Amadou,” a poem about Amadou Diallo, an  
innocent young man killed by 4 policemen and  
“My Name’s Kafka,” a poem about a man on trial for secret  
crimes never revealed to him, never committed.

I am studying the First and Fourth Amendments and their  
protections.

They are listening.  
I know.  
They are listening.

I will study and write about a new bill to strip terror suspects of  
habeas corpus.

I am merely a poet/writer. I seek the truth. That is all I crave-all I need. By discovering the truth, we will preserve our freedoms, I believe. If I am dangerous, it is because I question everything and strive to understand.

How many rights must we give up to protect our beautiful country?

They are listening.  
I know.  
They are listening.

Head in  
the Clouds,  
art by Cheryl  
Townsend



## Monanthous

Michael A. Rodriguez

Every couple of weeks  
She flushes out a seed--  
A derelict to the mixture  
Of our chromosomes;  
Each time her body rids  
Itself of these unfertile kernels  
I feel heartbroken because  
Each one could've been  
A sprout I'd love; but at the end  
Of the month her viscous goop  
Is bundled in heaps of tissue  
And thrown away in the trash  
Alongside worthless weeds;  
This process is repeated until  
We mesh our chromosomes  
Or until she runs out of seeds.

## There is blood on all our hands

IB Rad

There is blood on all our hands,  
what can justify this callous carnage?  
"WMD," "democracy,"  
"ridding the world of Sadam Husein..."  
what will wash away the stain?  
Oil, domestic politics,  
national power, personal gain...?  
There is blood on all our hands,  
what will wash away the stain?

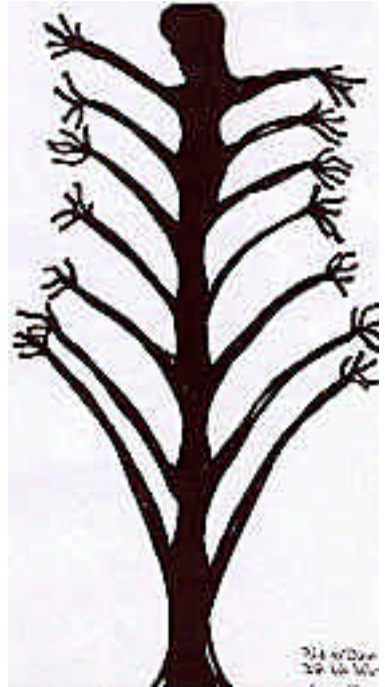
# Poet Meets Poet

Je'free

I know of another poet  
who lives at the 3rd floor of my apartment  
He invited me to his place one day  
filled with piles of laundry,  
and a few broken beer bottles  
The room smelled as if  
he passed gas there, and held it hostage  
longer than his week old beard  
It made me wonder  
how can this poet organize his thoughts  
when he could not organize his chores

Before we even talked,  
he went through his 2 day old unchecked mails,  
with one rejection letter from some publisher  
He sighed & made a comment:  
“I just need one break. But, I guess,  
opportunity is as elusive  
as a young pussy to an old fart.  
A hemorrhoid-tucker in some  
convalescent home is at times  
better than a struggling poet.”

Then, when the moonlight hit  
his face on the way to me,  
he said: “Hey, Je'free. I've read your book.  
My new favorite poet now is  
Je'free, Je'free, Je'-”  
As he was completing  
the last syllable of my name,  
I somewhat felt like the penis  
of overflowing flattery being jerked off



If We Were Trees, at  
by Edward Michael  
O'durr Supranowicz

He moved & sounded erratic though,  
as if on LSD or some drug,  
despite the calming, symphonic  
classical Mozart playing  
which he probably plays when he  
writes

A few minutes of silence;  
then, he was puking like crazy  
It struck me, that I had to ask myself:  
“What the hell am I doing here?”  
Maybe I should just come back  
for better conversation  
when he is less fucked up

# Dueling Princes

Scott Heigel

To me,  
You will always be more than  
Mickey Mouse, s dog or  
The king of the underworld –  
You are my rebel planet,  
The one who always refused  
To follow behind the others,  
Making your own off-kilter elliptical way  
Through the black veldt of space,  
My dual dueling princes  
Pluto and Charon.  
Not hot like sexy Mercury,  
Not venerable as Venus,  
Not home like Terra Firma,  
Nor the lustful machismo of Mars,  
Nor great and large like Jupiter,  
Nor bejeweled like ringed Saturn  
Nor the butt (ha ha) of every  
Juvenile joke like poor Uranus,  
Just an anomaly past Neptune  
Nor are you now even a  
Planet any more by the whim  
Of these learned astronomers –  
Just a lone misfit  
Adrift amidst our cosmology,  
Unknowable and now  
Unwanted.  
Fear not,  
For you will never be alone –  
Together we shall wander,  
And be obscure,  
And keep our secrets.



## CRAIG HOSPITAL, DENVER

Cindy Forsburg

It's clinical,  
but they use a disinfectant  
that smells remotely like flowers.  
Sitting in the lobby,  
a pretty girl lost to trauma  
stares out into space.  
She'll never speak again,  
but the nurses speak to her,  
smiling every time they pass  
with "hello" and "how are you."  
Out in the parking lot,  
the people with new wheelchairs  
learn to negotiate curbs  
on a street  
they hadn't planned to travel.

Later in the afternoon,  
look for them up in the skyway,  
where the walls are windows  
and the light is warm.  
They'll be reclining  
under watch of mountains,  
tilting back for a change of blood.  
Weight shift, they call it,  
cradled in the arms of the sun.

# A poem written while listening to Billy Joel

Brandon Kinkade

Bear open your naked soul, young one, and walk patiently one  
uncoordinated foot in front of the other  
in through the out door.

Let the cold Northern breeze wrestle with  
the uncombed, shaggy back ends of your hair.

Never be bribed into a staring contest with the past.  
For her soft brown eyes will drown you into a pool  
of guilt and submission.

Don't dare glance back over your left shoulder,  
not even out of curiosity of what it could have been!  
Only dare to push yourself forward like an assembly line  
through the love streets and soft parades of the big city.

Plaster a smile end to end across your youthful face and  
run blindfolded and cross-eyed doped up on caffeine and amphetamines  
through America's open court yards.

Stand free kicking dust up from alligator boots with your thumb sticking  
up fashionably  
Out of a black-tanned leather jacket.

You're a trained model of James Dean  
with oil drenched hair seeping over Buddy Holly glasses and  
a movie script with an acting class receipt crumbled like  
The Berlin Wall in the back pocket of your leg hugging jeans.

Your California dreamin' to quote cheesy 80's flicks,  
light Johnny Depp's cigarettes, guzzle the cheapest Wal-Mart wine like all  
other West Hollywood trash, and make love on a freshly washed beach  
towel against the crashing symbols of the oceans' motherly arms.



Maybe we can force open the chest of life and stage a fake retro revolution, Protest against corporate America, lay openly in Midwestern farms on sticky, hot Summer nights passing the hash pipe while counting the stars and contemplating on middle class government conspiracies.

Tonight, the lights go out on Broadway.  
The snow pours heavily like a broken faucet around us as we  
Latch onto each other like two sea urchins grasping tightly to coral  
for dear life against the tide.

Forever and a day, my sun will rise and set like a kitchen timer in your eyes.

# HIGH LIGHT AMID DIMLY RECALLED FACES

Richard Fein

My uncle Sidney repeated the same story till his time was up.  
He'd always start by asking me, "Don't you remember all of it?"  
And he'd follow by, "Oh, you were only five."  
And I'm still wondering  
if he knew the answer, why ask the question.  
But it's our questioning that defines our species,  
even though we pass by a lifetime of faces,  
never asking, except for a very few, who any of them are.  
But there was that singular face in Princeton N.J.  
when we were stopped for a red light.  
A shabby old man with wild gray hair and baggy pants  
approached my uncle's window and asked for the time,  
then held up his broken watch.  
My tinkerer uncle took the shabby man's watch  
and from his bag took out a screwdriver.  
The old man's eyes seemed far away, turned upwards to beyond the clouds.  
Three green lights later Sidney set the now working watch to 3:30.  
The old man thanked him and then the fourth green light.  
Suddenly somewhere near New York my uncle pulled off the road,  
his face lit up, his voice so excited, "he was, he was. . ."  
And for the rest of his life he'd pester me,  
"Don't you remember all of it?" And he'd answer, "Oh, you were only five."  
"Oh my god," then he'd deafen my ears, "I fixed time for Einstein!"

# KNOWLDGE

Ed Coet

To conquer doubt and find reason in the absurd.  
To rationalize confusion; make sense out of the illogical.  
Define, explain, and understand the misunderstood.  
To solve life's mysteries; resolve unanswered questions.  
To transcend space; breach the conscious and unconscious.  
To understand anything and to know everything.  
To acquire complete knowledge.  
Simply answer - how and why?



## Hero

Justin Fitzpatrick

A Hero  
Is someone who  
Turns back around  
With no chance to win

The Blessing, art  
by Adriana  
DeCastro



## Fade to black

Kenneth W. Anderson, Jr.

He tried to remember  
the lines in her face.  
Her closed eyes  
spoke to him of silent moments  
when they sat close,  
slowly sinking  
into the contours and crevices of upholstered hills.

Her thin hands wearily stretched  
ready to pull him in,  
saving him from the cold.

But the smile wasn't hers.  
Her lips did not move with gentleness,  
the colour too bright.  
His hands searched his pockets,  
the small bit of linen  
clung to his shaking fingers as he began to wipe.

She was in his bones.

## THE UNTITLED

Chris Major

She's taking me  
on the Town again,  
all beer and chasers,  
being jostled from  
bar to bar.  
Pissed 'n' pickled  
by ten o'clock,  
me soakin' it up  
with a greasy kebab  
before floating around  
the pubs 'n' clubs.

Then  
morning,  
and a banging head-  
damage done.  
A technicolour toilet yawn;  
her wishing she hadn't,  
me waiting to be .....  
.....born.

So, you “discovered” America! What if?

## journey of discovery (of a sort)

jim greenwald

It is time for the Nations to join together in a journey of discovery.  
Let us sail east in our best canoes.  
We will search for new lands and new discoveries.  
Bring good gifts to trade with the natives.  
For we wish to be fair in our dealings.  
Imagine all the new that we will see.  
Imagine all the help we will be.  
Many days we sailed into the night.  
No land in sight. No birds in flight.  
Some were afraid but we continued our journey.  
At last there was land and we came ashore.  
They spoke a strange tongue.  
This much we knew.  
They called themselves the French.  
We told them we wanted the Riviera.  
Had them sign with their mark.  
Fair we were, giving them gifts.  
We left them cases of Ripple and some Preparation H.  
Then off we went in search of more.  
Soon to discover, land shaped like a boot.  
We traded with these Italians they called themselves.  
We left them cases of Ragu and coupons for Pizza Hut in return for Rome,  
a good trade.  
We were told of tribes in the north.  
We sailed with haste to their shores.  
We traded with these English they called themselves.  
We left cases of Johnson’s Baby Powder and Spray Starch in return for London.  
A good trip indeed, so much land we acquired.  
We will come back again.  
We will teach them our language.  
We will teach them to bathe.

# Greenwich Observatory

Christian Ward

I was eleven when I first saw  
the Greenwich Observatory,  
its aperture fat and wide  
like Atlas's pregnant wife

watching the stars herded  
across the sky by an invisible  
shepherd.

I tried to catch them years later  
when I was watching comets  
in a Kentish orchard,

but they seemed to slip  
through my fingers.  
Perhaps if I'd had a trap then,  
I would have been able to hold  
onto the brightest thing in the sky.



City Methodist  
Church, art by  
Joel McGregor



## Plainsong of the Passionate

Ron Arnold

Love will find us  
the way the wind strums  
the harp strings of a tree.  
The way the hummingbird slurps  
nectar from a berry.

Here we lie beside ourselves and wonder why  
a moment so joyous makes us cry.

Love will find us  
the way Aquarius and Virgo  
sparkle alongside the moon's glow.  
The way string sunshine melts  
into butter to make daffodils grow.

It doesn't matter whether it's gay or straight.  
Occurring early in our life or late.

Love will find us  
the way speckled trout swim  
upstream to find a pool to spawn.  
The way an owl's *hoo...hoooo*  
marks the coming of dawn.

prose  
the meat and potatoes stuff

part 11 (the March 2007 installment) of  
**THE DRIVE** Kenneth DiMaggio

“They’re probably his idols. But it’s always good to play a cut from one of these albums at parties where—I don’t know—things are just getting too normal and predictable and what the hell, there’s nothing wrong with cheesy music so long as you don’t have to pay for it.”

“Yeah, but when *you* want to listen to it. I think he just put some version of that on right now.”

“And look, he’s even starting to ‘head bang’ to it.”

Just the music itself is enough for us to laugh into an “art attack.” But now that he started to put a little “rhythm” into his music, it was enough to make The Young Artist announce:

“Girls with big hair!”

After which I added:

“—predictable guitar solos”

Which might have seemed like examples of disorder and chaos to the old folks shopping at the Special Needs store. And maybe not just the old folks, but also the people who bought the plastic shoes they wore for special occasions like re-born baptisms where you let some self-taught minister dunk you in some clap-board church septic tank.

But not before you publicly renounce your past dangerous dalliances listening to “THE DEVIL’S MUSIC!”

—we both said at the same time, before we broke out laughing.

“Can I help you find something?” the clerk finally broke, with a nearly tomato-orange face.

“Um, do you have any Ratt, Poison, Night Ranger?” I asked as I started to leave.

“Cause if you do, I know a couple of gas station attendants who listen to that music as well,” said The Young Artist

“And don’t forget warehouse forklift operators,” I added.

“And also how they still live at home.”

By now there were teeth in the tomato.

“Later dude,” I said, giving him the Satan metal fingers; i.e., thumb with two middle fingers folded in; index and pinky finger pronging out, as if the horns of Satan.

“And be careful you don’t throw out your neck and get a pinched nerve.”

“Kinda hard to take a headbanger seriously in a neck brace.”

Tonight there was going to be a pile of burning glam metal records in some

three family house basement. Oh, it felt good to be an artist.

But it also felt bad—to start to become what you earlier criticized. No, we were not in danger of becoming Philistines and elitists. But wait—we were supposed to be so avant garde that there was not yet a word to describe who we were...and already our art made us correct and exclusive. Suddenly, it did not feel so good to be an artist.

Though a thief, yes

A thief who took—

“Five? You took five CDs?” I asked.

“Hey,” she said. “We were doing such a good job at tearing apart his music where he could not look up, that even *you* could have lifted a CD.”

“What do you mean, *you*?”

“You feel like getting something to eat?” she said as she started to put back her fake splint in her purse. “I’m hungry.”

“You don’t think I did some other illegal stuff besides smoking pot?”

“No,” she quickly answered.

“Well, well—“

“I feel like ice cream,” she said to me. “You turned me on to rice pudding, so I want to treat you to some ice cream. That’s if this mall has any.”

“I used to steal books,” I said. “When I was a substitute teacher in a classroom. I used to take books.”

The Young Artist stopped, turned to me with a slightly endearing and condescending look, and said:

“I once took a wallet from my teacher’s purse.”

—And more. She told me all about it as we sat at a plastic table underneath a plastic umbrella outside of the plastic kiosk that sold ice cream. Well, not plastic ice cream. At least that was real. And the kiosk was in the center of the mall, where we had a great view of all the elderly mall walkers hobbling by. That’s not being compassionate, but the day you come to terms with unnatural colors of polyester is the day you start settling for that ee-zee listening life with the sound track by Phil Collins, for no one really listens to Phil Collins. How can you, when it is all the same?

So the history of a young artist...in this case, a history of a well to do bright kid slightly rebellious about her privilege. College was always one of her primary goals; in fact, she had the background and money to go to a better college than the one she was now in, which I soon learned was only temporary: she had been accepted into the big schools, and even though this one gave her almost free tuition (she was in a special honors program) she did not need the money. Her family was well off. How well off? Oh, her father had enough land not to see her neighbor’s house; not that big a deal, some might say, but there was also room for both her and her sister to have their own *horse*. (I had a dog, and as far as Fido’s chain could reach, was his to roam.) In the meantime, the honors-bound student was becoming a delinquent in a more creative sense: there was no such thing as pointless vandalism: vandalism had to have a point, which is why she



and her little gang trashed out the suburban youth center when they were thirteen or fourteen. It was just getting to be too—

“Fuzzy,” as she explained it. “You know, like the fuzz on a stuffed animal? Did you ever have any stuffed animals?”

“I had a bunny,” I said. “But it was okay, I was only five—okay, eight.”

Well, it was worse than that, she explained. Her stuffed animals were on the endangered species list, which made them even more precious and sentimental. The weak, the noble; the crippled but courageous; it was also the motif and world view for everything about this youth center: from nearly extinct African animals giving you wise advice on safe sex pamphlets, to the selections of only progressive music to choose from at the center: choices your parents would have certainly approved of like Fleetwood Mac or K.D. Lang, and even if you liked them along with the Ani Di Franco, it was still music that was noble and courageous; therefore, the CDs along with the center had to be trashed.

However, she was not hell bent: she was content to live in paradise: she just took advantage of the opportunity to graffiti or trash it out once in awhile. That is why she stole the wallet from the purse of her favorite teacher, who happened to teach English: she even used her credit card to charge a few things, and when she was caught, she was given in-school suspension and a regimen for Prozac. Why? Because she had a horse, she was an honor student, she won a student creative writing contest. Yes, and also because she charged a heap of books ranging from great classics such as Carlos Castenada’s, “The Teachings of Don Juan,” to mere pulp like Charles Dickens’ “David Copperfield”. Unfortunately, after she apologized, served her time in in-school suspension and started to become a bit of a zombie once the Prozac settled in, her teacher let her keep the “David Copperfield.”

“That sucked,” I said.

“Are you kidding me? It was the worst thing about the whole experience.”

Which was when she no longer took the Prozac; in spite of the way her parents threatened to cut her off financially. (How could they do that while she was living at home? Cut her cable television? Her internet? Yet she knew that even liberal parents could become conservatives; so she re-channeled her delinquency into more creative acts of destruction.)

“I discovered that I could I still trash out the world through Art,” she proudly noted.

I softly nodded as I looked at her with great admiration, and also the awareness and sense of someone who was privileged and perhaps even possessed by genius. She sensed what I was thinking.

“I was also a normal kid,” she said.

“Yeah, right,” I laughed.

“But people in the scene we’re in, don’t want to hear that,” she added. “It’s supposed to be fucked up if you have normal parents or if you love animals. Well, that’s fucked up, and it’s supposed to be fucked up if you liked horses and had other kinds of pets. Well, I’d better never hear of you hurting an animal.”

I put up my hands.



“Not me,” I said. “I had a bunny, remember? Even though—it was stuffed.”

(Better not tell her about the dog. But what the hell, like any ambitious working class creature, he eventually found a way to get out of his chain and escape.)

“Let me tell you,” she said, “animals can be pretty smart. Sometimes they try to tell you things. For years, my dog was trying to tell me something. We would walk together in the woods near my house, and whenever we came to this uneven clump, he’d run around it, and then run ten feet away from it, bark, wag her tail, and wait for me. I would always look at what was there. Nothing but a clump with a lot of moss, rocks, ferns. And then one time I went for a walk after it had rained real hard, and this time, when my dog did the run-around thing, I noticed this dull butter-scotch surface—sort of like a ball or bowl, and when I went to pick it up, I pulled up a skull.”

WHAT!

—my eyes shocked open. She looked down and giggled.

“The funny thing is, I didn’t feel that way about it—“

She looked up to explain:

“I knew it was a skull, and knew that it was real. What I didn’t know, was why it was practically in our back yard. How come we never knew about this?”

“There was your dog,” I said, still in some shock over what she said.

“I told you animals are smart; I told you they talk to us. The problem is, we don’t listen. Even when it comes to each other. And so, I ran right into the house.”

“With the skull?”

She nodded.

“It was right in my hand. My mother was in the kitchen. She was on the phone. As soon as she saw what I was holding, she screamed just like you were about to.”

We both laughed.

“I tried to tell her not to worry. This skull can’t hurt you. It’s dead or something like that, but she just grabbed it out of my hand, made me go to my room, and that’s the last I ever saw of that skull.”

“And that was it?”

She cleared her throat, and then innocently asked:

“Do you mean, were there more bodies in my backyard?”

“Well, yeah.”

“Sicko.”

I hunched in my shoulders in and cringed, trying to make a quick retreat. She folded her arms.

“No, I’m afraid there was only one body—actually, it was a skeleton. It had been there—for ten years, the police think. They were never really sure, and they were never able to identify this body.”

She squeezed her arms in. She screwed around her folded in arms until they had become a slightly crooked taut bar.

“And that’s what really started to bug me. The way no one could ever figure out who this person was. The police think it might have been a woman. They *think!*”

The latter of which was said like a cleaver chopping down a slab of beef.

“Whoa. I’m not the cops. Far from it. I couldn’t even maintain authority as a substitute teacher.”

“You couldn’t even control a Kindergarten class,” she sarcastically said.

I—I didn’t say anything, because, well, my sub for a half day kindergarten was one of my toughest assignments, as if she had just realized that.

“So it bothers you that no one was ever able to identify that skeleton.”

“Don’t change the subject,” she quickly said. “And yeah, it bothered me. I mean—just how the fuck could someone disappear? And no one ever knew about it? That’s what was so fucking scary; not that it was a bunch of bones in my backyard, because people die, and yes, they even die where they are not supposed to, like my backyard. But no one could tell who this person was, and worse—no one seemed to care. They were willing to forget about it. But I would ask.”

She now made a fist, and then made small thrusting punches with it as she said with quiet sharpness:

“And ask. And ask. And ask.

And that is when they sent me to get *helped*. That’s when they sent me to a psychiatrist...”

I softly reached up with both of my hands and gently took one of her fists in mine. She unraveled her other fist and placed her hand against mine, and for the next few moments, we held each other like that: she looking like she was about to cry; me, looking down into a similar fog or tunnel for which there was no answer.

Finally, she pulled her hands away, sniffed, and said, “Thanks.”

“Sure...” is all I said.

“Yourself...?” she asked. “No criminal past?”

“Not really,” I said. “I try though—at least with my poetry. For me, the horrible thing is when there are no words. I can’t think of anything more horrible. Even more horrible than my grandmother’s death; painful as that was for me. How she died—no one should die like that. Because words were hard for her to begin with—well, at least in English. Coming from the old country, whose language—I did not know.”

“That’s rough; not being able to be understood by someone you love,” she said.

“I could understand my grandmother okay,” I noted. “And one time she called me on the phone. I had just got out of class. I was still in high school. And right away, I could tell that her tone was off. She was rambling about the weather...watching television...not feeling well...”

I paused as I once again noted how nobody in my family were ever completely sure how she died, but:

“She was dying. There was no more time, except to make one last phone call. At that moment, we both knew that, and God I tried to keep the conversation going as long as I could; God, how I fucking tried! And the weather never seemed more profound and insightful...”

I softly laughed. I didn’t need to. She was not ashamed for what I had been saying. I had no need to be. But...

“But it still had to come to an end,” I finally said. “We still had to say good-

bye. Only for her...it would be the last time...

I...I've always been trying to write that conversation—to remember what it was we exactly said—and even if I could, it would still fail, because neither of us were ever able to get at what this conversation was about. Because there is no way to say goodbye for the last time to someone you love. So in a way, words are a joke, the same time they are the most precious thing there is. I don't know...I don't know..."

Except that the mall had now become a cold, quiet, almost empty bowl. If it was a container, then it was space that seemed to burn whatever was put inside of it. It was a vessel that was incapable of holding anything for long—junk as well as treasure.

And so we left to go to church—meaning that “cathedral” that The Young Artist wanted to see. Because it came out the other way—as in attending a religious service, we both laughed. There was nothing to be embarrassed about though. Almost no one went to the church that we were now going to: the bedrock institution for a new immigrant people unsure about America. These days, a church like that was being closed every other week. The old parishioners were dying off. Their descendents had either moved away or morphed into a modern generic American culture. I wondered if we might not be too late for this church. If it was still open, expect to enter the sick room of an old dying, distant relative. I was never religious, but the prominence that religion had for my ancestors was still strong enough for me to put on a face of proper mourning when such a church had to be closed. It was just odd and also sad that you did not know the name of this dying relative, and whoever he or she was, they were too sick or not conscious enough to tell you.

About half way to the car, The Young Artist slipped her arm in with mine. I managed to squeeze back and whisper “Thanks”. Before we separated to get into the car, we tightly, briefly, held and squeezed hands.

Once inside, she asked if I had a CD player. I laughed. If this car had anything, it should be an 8-track, and I barely have a radio, which I now turned on: a lot of squelchy, static wailing distortion and then a sharp click! As the Young Artist turned it off, I turned to offer some half joke, half apology. She had already slipped on the headphones from a portable CD player, and just like that, we were both alone.

Well, in a few hours I would be in the city. We'd not only be in contact, but she would soon be visiting. She would show all my hot, street sharp poetry friends a thing or two with a piece of this and a pried off piece of that and who knows what else! It would be nice to leave while there was still light out. Journeys should not be made in darkness, unless it is at the dark end of night's abyss. So there was still plenty of time to make this journey, but what exactly was the time? I looked at my wrist, and my cheap-o, drug store bought watch was who knows where, and the clock built into the dashboard—forget about it, it stopped working after everything started to die—during the Presidency of Ronald Reagan. That's when this city seemed to be hit by the ripple of several economic earthquakes that were

always starting someplace else, but were always felt their most devastating in small towns like this. As for any clocks outside, they all seemed to have disappeared. The only way to tell time was how the decline of the day left its pall on everything—like it did the small fronted store windows along main street: the yarn shop, the off track betting parlor, the Laundromat, they all seemed to have windows that were now like translucent slate gray chalk boards rather than the glimmering glass from a fresh bubbling aquarium. The gray dusty, chalk board meant that it was getting on to late afternoon. Two thirty, maybe even three. Close enough for that change in shifts to begin—from first to second, which is what the new crop of temporary laborers were waiting around for.

There were about a dozen and a half of them. Waiting on a small glass and paper littered oval shaped town green in the middle of this town's Main street. If anyone were to notice, here were the latest immigrants on display. Short, square shouldered, bronze men with high cheek bones and silky black hair. They were from Mexico or Peru and ranging from ages eighteen to sixty. Some were in groups of three or four, others, by themselves. All of them resigned to the way the upcoming night would get rolled to them like a losing pair of dice. Maybe tonight's temporary assignment would be in a warehouse, unloading trailers, or forklifting what would soon become junk that would go into the trash compacter. In the meantime, wait for vans to pick you up, and then bring you a couple of miles out to some large aluminum warehouse right off the interstate, which is where the American gulag was. What little time I did in it, made me a confirmed anarchist with a goal of working as little as possible. The shopping mall loading dock is one stop away from the anonymous rental space. One day you are a temporary laborer, the next, anonymous victim or killer: does it matter which one you are? Neither one has a distinct identity anymore.

And then this canal in the center of town. In all the time I have lived here, left, come back, and am now about to leave again, I still don't know where this twenty foot wide concrete basin goes to after it disappears into a sharp right a half a mile from a bridge. Where I see a couple of kids now standing. It looks like they are throwing rocks or bottles or bricks from it. Their target is the overturned shopping cart and the few tires clogging the gasoline colored canal water. For a few moments, they should hold a cease fire, because in that toxic waste kids, you might be able to read your future. In that industrial poisonous brook, you might see a future as a high school drop out with a 'come back' as a jar head in the Marine Corps: about what it was for one quarter of the kids I started high school with. The remainder? One quarter in jail, public assistance, or early death; the other quarter, minimum wage slavery as a troglodyte; more with a trade, but still never enough money—and the final quarter, state college graduates like myself, only where did I fuck up, not getting a suburb-a-void job in the civil service or this state's giant insurance industry?

**check out issues of cc&d for more of this story...**

# THE CROSS

Mel Waldman

It was an ordinary spring day, he believed, perhaps a little hotter than the rest. The old man sat by his window and looked out at the confused city folks below. The window was wide open, and the green window curtains were spread as wide and as far apart as possible to let the sun in and the sound of people. He craved to have the outside world come into his life and prayed for the noisy and chaotic intrusion of people and people's toys. But all he received was a further sense of despair and the bitter taste of air pollution, which filtered in from the outside.

The old man coughed, for he was smoking again. At 70, he might have been a dried up prune, but there was juice to him yet. He was a poisoned smoking machine that defied the laws of nature. His visit on earth was longer than expected. Indeed, he prayed to God every day, and sometimes 25 hours a day-for death.

He sat on a green butterfly chair, puffing and puffing, inhaling and exhaling and falling into an infinity of space and mind-a womblike meditation in a womblike, circular butterfly chair. He remembered the way it was, in contrast to the way it was now.

He whispered to himself: "This is my best. I've missed the mark. What happened to the dream of kings?"

He remembered the beginning as it was, or as he thought it was, the way it looked and moved and grew within. There were explosions followed by silence, and then nothing. He burst, split, and saw his being scatter throughout the universe. As he flew through space, he ate his flesh alive. He flew beyond good and evil, or into them. There are many ways to be untouched. After, he returned to the human form, and evolved in it, although one lived and died in every form, at once. The old man was a man of another dimension-a half-breed, half man and half God. And he sat in his butterfly chair.

He found safety in his chair and peace in the vast motion picture of his mind. He saw the good and the bad, the whole gamut of reality, and all was welcome. From his point of view, nothing could be excluded.

He saw a boy coming home from school. The boy lived in a big house with his father and mother. Father was a traveling salesman. Often he went on trips for weeks or months at a time. Sometimes Mother went with him. If she did, the boy stayed with Grandpa and Grandma. The boy loved the old folks. They were kind and gentle toward him. When Father was home,

he beat the boy, often without reason. Mother tried to control the man, but he was fierce. The boy, frightened and withdrawn, turned away from reality. He found solace in another world—a world of God and magic. He was only a little boy, but even little men could be magicians.

The little boy became a fine magician. He did marvelous things in his dark room upstairs. And his magic worked. Father and Mother thought he was stupid. Father despised him, but out of pity, stopped beating him as often.

The old man shouted to the black walls: “Ah, you old fool. You’re returning to childhood. Worse. You sit back and watch the world move forward. Helpless and impotent, you defy the process by reversing it. Stupid old man. Can’t distinguish between real and unreal. You tell the tale, often with fabrication, distortion, a perfect unity of falsehoods and poor memories, so the history of one man told by the same years later is false. Old man, you’re a dirty liar.”

He laughed heartily in his chair. A second later he was back in the dark room chanting to God and singing hallelujah. But the boy was aging and the old magic was becoming ineffective. A change was necessary if he were to survive.

The Man was sitting in the park. The boy, just out of school, passed him on his way home. The Man with golden eyes was sitting among a crowd of ugly people. When the boy saw him, the Man grinned in his seat. The boy went home and ran upstairs. He chanted new hymns, kissed his hands, and spat into the darkness which suffocated him. The new magic had come.

For a while, he didn’t see the Man. He sensed a time for preparation. Didn’t know what was coming, yet he craved the unknown reality. Although he missed the Man, the separation enhanced his being. His glorious fate was approaching.

One day the Man sat in the park. The boy knew he was there and ran to the Man with golden eyes. He screamed with thunder. His lustful screams echoed through the park. Suddenly, his dead body was alive.

They left the world he knew. The Man took him to an isolated farm, where life was new and fresh. The Man entered a dilapidated shack, forbidding the boy to follow. The boy left to explore the countryside.

He traveled until the shack was no longer in view. He saw a cave in

the distance. It fascinated him. When he was about a hundred yards from the cave, he got on his knees. He crawled toward the cave, at times gasping for breath, for the air seemed poisoned. As he approached the cave, his body weakened. He looked up at the sign which adorned the entrance. Before him was a huge cross. He wept in agony for the cross that stood firm and strong and beautiful-for all to see-for all to love.

The cross was above the entrance to the cave, untouched and pure. When he tried to kiss it, the cross was always far away. Finally, in one painful move, he turned away from it. He never looked back. In the distance, the vast emptiness cut through his bones. Up in the sky, he saw dark blues and heard the sound of night wings. Enchanted by the fluent colors above and the sound of night wings, he lay in the field and fell asleep. His peace was soon interrupted by the sounds-of voices chanting, of silent intervals, of his heart. Moments later, the chanting got louder. Trapped in a circle of darkness, he waited. And then a circle of fire, within the darkness, surrounded him. He was at the center of the fire, watched by faces. Many ugly faces observed him. And the Man spoke.

“Night wings return from the long journey. I smell them in the dark. I hear them swinging, clapping, drifting in the cool air. They swing back and forth kinetically, and ricochet from the heavy walls of polluted air. I feel their dark, mobile eyes searching for me in the heavy mist. They lust for me. They beat me and burn my body with jagged wings. They rip my insides to shreds. They leave, yet I wait for the sound of heavy, dark wings coming at me from all sides.”

The boy screamed. The Man walked to his side and gave him a gun. “Feel it. Yes, it feels good. Night wings will return. Kill them.”

“Shoot up into the sky!”

The boy shot wildly into the sky. Nothing fell. The bullets flew through the naked sky and disappeared. But from the circle of fire, came a frenzied man shouting at the boy: “Murderer! Killer!”

The boy turned and pulled the trigger before he understood. And Father was dead. When the boy screamed, the crowd of ugly faces disappeared.

“You look rested,” the Man said as the boy opened his eyes. “We must go now.”

The boy wanted to ask him what had happened, but he was afraid. They returned to the park, where the boy left the Man.

When he got home, Mother was sitting in the corner of the living

room giggling, for no apparent reason. "You're home early."

He looked at her quizzically. Then he went to his room. But before he shut the door, Mother shouted: "Your father's going on a trip. Say goodbye to him." He shut the door.

Father was downstairs screaming at Mother. The boy filled his mind with magic and found courage too, hidden deep within, perhaps buried in a dark room in the dark house of his soul. He ran down to the living room.

"Come here, son. Come say goodbye to your father."

He didn't move. Father had a cross around his neck. The boy was crushed. Finally, he said to Father: "Ain't you dead?" And he ran upstairs, where he chanted. He pointed his fingers up toward the sky.

A little past midnight the doorbell rang. Father was back. The plane had engine trouble. It was grounded for the night.

All night he chanted. He took eight boxes of matches which he had hidden in the closet. He placed dozens of matches side by side till they formed a huge circle in the room. He lit the matches and watched the circle light up. Then he stood outside the door and screamed fire.

"Father, help me!" he cried. When he heard footsteps coming up the stairs, he hid in the bathroom. Father leaped into the burning room for his son. Mother was downstairs screaming, her frenzied eyes on fire, burning with madness.

The boy ran back to the room, shutting it furiously. And after, he shouted: "Father is dead-is dead!"

He waited. But the smoke forced him downstairs. As the house went up in flames, the boy and mother escaped.

"He is dead-is dead. It happened," he repeated again and again.

Tomorrow came. The boy awakened and went downstairs. Father was leaving. He left.

The boy stayed in his room. The telephone rang in the afternoon. Mother was about to get the phone. But the boy yelled from upstairs: "I'll get it."

He picked up the phone. He smiled. Listened carefully. Put the phone back on the receiver. Went downstairs and told Mother: "Father is dead-is dead. The plane crashed. There was a big ball of fire."



# Old Bookends

Pat Dixon

Barry Bramlett's heavy fingertips rested on his keyboard. He stared into unfocused air three and a half inches in front of his computer screen.

After forty-three trance-like seconds, he shook his head, drew a deep breath, and double-clicked the e-mail titled "Was ist neu mit du Vii?" Then he scrolled to the bottom to estimate its length, rescrolled to the top, and began reading his second wife's latest message:

Dear Vii, Four longish moons ago when I wrote you how I wanted to write my Memoirs (to be titled KEEP ROWING!) you suggested I could maybe get over my writer's block by buying a tape recorder and talking my story into it as if I was telling it to a close friend. Co-inkie-dinkie and thanks to you I already have a tape recorder. I purchased this some years back at your suggestion as you must have forgotten. I was experiencing those verbal attacks from "Frankie Fang" who was determined to unseat me from my position at Witherspoon's alumni office. I had it in my jacket pocket when I sat in his office for a "fireside" type of chat with him to try to amend our "soured" relationship.

*Forgotten? I don't remember it now even when I'm reminded,* he thought. *I remember all sorts of crap about that asshole Frank Adams, but not the tape recorder—but—it sounds just like the kind of advice I'd give—oh—twenty-two, twenty-three years ago.* He read more:

At one point FANG seemed to be amenable to the idea, but he hardened at one point. And he made it clear he would not rescind. Natürlich I found that confusing but I was prepared to record it. Thank you. Now here is the follow up. As time wore on I began to realize that Frank was someone's toady. But that's not the point. HE should never have allowed himself to be persuaded to be an axe man because of someone else's ego. Shall I clarify that statement?

I was devastated that I was facing the prospect of losing my job because of this idiot. Not only that, but it would mean severe consequences on my retirement benefits. The plan the employees were in was making money hand over fist. I started with a meager two thousand dollars investment and within 3 years it had grown to fifteen thousand and was growing, growing, growing. I estimated that if I stayed with them for five more years, I would have an annuity worth 4 times that amount in a retirement account. Then

suddenly FANG redefined my position and classified me as part time worker. I worked eight hours per day still, but two shifts as a part time worker! Therefore did not have the benefits of a full time worker. And as a part-time worker was not entitled to health or annuity benefits. As such my salary would be reduced by \$10,000 per annum. And that's why I left the place. Now here's the reason behind all of this. The Chairman of the Witherspooners Committee (Dom DelSesto - 1957 graduate) was hot on the trail of my bod.

*As were at least half a dozen others, he thought. This one's news to me—but why would you tell me everything that happened—after we split? Nine years together—six good years.*

He plied me with some very nice presents and sweet talk. I regarded it as “harmless flirting.” This man who was highly regarded in the business world, a millionaire, with a wife. Surely he wasn't serious! He smiled, he cajoled, he was very pleasant. And Tom Vickers my first boss there had a high regard for him. (One of the reasons I was always especially pleasant to Dom.) As a payback, I bought Dom an exquisite Italian silk necktie as a thank you for all the nice little favors he bestowed upon me. And like a sappy, high school mentality boy, he showed it to everyone he met. Wore it for every publicity picture that was ever taken of him, and sent me the clippings. With a little note saying, “There you see, I'm thinking of you.”

He even wore it to Scotland when he golfed at St. Andrew Golf Course and attended the banquet. I guess I just did not connect the dots. In my mind, I thought he was just a nice fellow trying to be nice because I was Tom's Administrative Assistant. Here was a man who was involved with million dollar breakfast fund raisers. And I, in my naiveté, responded to his question, “Is there something I can get for you when I'm in London?” saying, “Well, I do like Yardley's Lavender spray cologne.” And what do you know, when he returned I had SIX huge bottles sitting on my desk. He would accept no monetary re-imburements. I never offered more than that. At one point, however, he did ask me out to dinner. But his request sounded more like a casual flirtatious remark and so in my mind I dismissed it as just that. (After all he was a pillar of society, with a wife who enjoyed the prestige of his position.) Not for a minute did I think he was really serious, I honestly felt he was only indulging in a mild flirtation and was not serious. Subsequently, he made it clear in an encounter in my office that he was indeed serious and meant everything he said and was intent upon having a relationship with me. And told me flat out, I would be sorry for not taking him seriously.

Sensing where Ava-Lynn Bramlett's narrative was going, Barry Bramlett felt his cheeks begin to warm and his mouth draw tight. He had always tried to be protective of her, the woman who had rescued him from the horrors and fallout of his first marriage.

*If you'd told me about this asshole at the time*, he thought, *I'd have broken his freaking face for him—like I did that punk's that got rough with you in Philly right after we split.* Barry squinted at the wall behind his computer. *Maybe that's why you didn't tell me. Wonder where this fat turd is now. I bet I could take him—even at my age.*

It was shortly after this that Tom Vickers retired and “Fang” replaced Tom as my boss and began to give me a rough time. I still did not connect the dots. At one point, I called Dom and told him of the situation with Frank and asked him if he could he do any thing about it, being the big honcho, etc., his comment was “Did Frank bring up my name in the conversation?” BINGO! A month after I left Witherspoon to work at St. Stephen as asst. minister's secretary, I received a nighttime call from Dom. HE consulted his records and looked up my phone number. He told me he was so sorry I was no longer an employee. Perhaps we could get together and have dinner? I hung up the phone. Never heard from him since, thankfully. What's your take? In your mind, wouldn't this story make a short magazine piece on its own merit - as human interest?

*No. No, it would not!* he thought. It needs some justice—some vengeance—revenge—in it.

In my mind, maybe I'm just a very stupid, don't want to be obligated to anyone, am not a bed bunny, or a slab of beef on a hook type of mentality. If I had let go of all that rigid type of thinking and had a bit more compassion for a deprived type of mentality, willing to supplement me with all kinds of goodies, maybe I wouldn't be at the bottom of this heap I'm living with. Nes pas? Tell me your thoughts. Am I really retarded? ELLEVEN

*Sometimes—on some topics—including French spelling*, he thought, fully aware that her spoken French was infinitely more fluent than his own had ever been. *But so am I*, he added.

It took Barry nearly two minutes to locate the e-mail he had written to her about taping one's thoughts to avoid writer's block:

dear elleven,

i think you should buy a cheap (\$25?) tape recorder & talk to it about life—even when driving (but not on the golf course driving). then transcribe what you say. pitch it to some people like your daughter in your mind (what would you tell them?). then you can always edit it for polish & coherence.

Ava-Lynn Hein (Massingill) Bramlett, whom he had met at

Witherspoon Academy's library one spring evening, had a daughter, now in her mid-forties, by her first marriage ("My first husband—well—he was just a big douche is the whole story"). Smitten almost instantly by Ava-Lynn's V-shaped face, honey-blonde hair, athletic body, and saucy tongue with its cute "Chermin" accent, Barry had begun courting her with the nickname Eleven—partly a pun on her name but chiefly his wannabe-witty answer to his own question: "If I were rating you on a scale of zero to ten, guess where it would be?"

*Still good advice*, he thought, staring at his own words and recalling how he had often broken through his own writer's block when putting together his many conference papers, his professional articles, and his textbook on inorganic chemistry. He paused and smiled at his e-style of using chiefly lowercase letters—a playful pretence that he thought and typed far too rapidly to use shift keys for conventional uppercase letters—and then continued reading his own prose with genuine pleasure:

"good" writing doesn't just come out of the first or 2nd draft—it takes (usually) many drafts with lots of cutting & filling and moving around of the parts. but getting the FIRST draft down on paper is the hardest part. that's what blocks most folks. do that & then edit what you have. & it will gradually get easier as you go along—but you have to start.

how 'bout i buy you a little tape recorder as an advance birfdee gipht?  
se7en

In instant response to Barry's new nickname for her, which she was delighted with, Ava-Lynn nicknamed him Seven—solely because it was a number that rhymed with Eleven. Barry had been quite disappointed with this, taking it partly as her subconscious ranking of him on a scale of ten, but he had never imparted his feeling to her—before, during, or since their years of marriage. After more than three decades, it still annoyed him, but he had used it, or several variants of it, to sign every one his writings to her.

He pondered how to respond to her latest message. After slightly more than five minutes, he decided it would be best to sleep on the matter.

In the early afternoon of the next day, Ava-Lynn, freshly showered after nine holes of golf, opened Barry's reply to her:

dear e11even—

i'm going to comment on a couple of points by copying & pasting some of your words into this e-note.

YOU: What's your take? In your mind, wouldn't this story make a short magazine piece on its own merit - as human interest?

ME: only if that heap of horse turd gets bumped off—or some other happy ending is there. readers/editors would probably not like an unhappy ending.

YOU: In my mind, maybe I'm just a very stupid, don't want to be obligated to anyone, am not a bed bunny, or a slab of beef on a hook type of mentality. If I let go of all that rigid type of thinking and had a bit more compassion for a deprived type of mentality, willing to supplement me with all kinds of goodies, maybe I wouldn't be at the bottom of this heap I'm living with. Nes pas? Tell me your thoughts.

ME: i think we're both 'retarded' or out of sync with how the greedy skunks work. it's called 'having good moral character' (in aristotle's ETHICS & a hundred other places). in retrospect i'd say it was what tipped my first wife over the edge so that she kept me up past my bedtime berating me for 6 or 7 hrs on several hundred occasions. i just wasn't 'a team player' (my first dept. head's phrase, said to me about 42 yrs ago). in different ways we both have 'been true to ourselves' (to paraphrase the bard) in the workplace & it has cost us—but ask instead, 'what would I think of myself IF I did x,y,z as requested?' back in the army i was asked to falsify reports & declined—as punishment, I got chosen to fill a slot post headquarters had—and it turned out to be in the MPs. that one worked out okay, but many others (as when i refused to help another dept. head squeeze a senior colleague out) cost me several hundred thousand bucks from ten yrs of promotion delays. would I be happier having got paid to do that? would you have liked me better or worse? anyway, if it takes being a 'dick' or a 'XXXX' to succeed financially, then maybe some of us don't want to play. okay?

*Always the long-winded repetitious professor, she thought. I have heard these stories at least two hundred times!*

did i mention yet that jack dolan my former dept head has prostate cancer? or that his wife's breast cancer has returned? that has to be a double blow that hurts. if i were superstitious i'd be wondering if he is being punished for his many sins against humanity. i was tempted to phone & offer to run errands if they needed a driver to pick up stuff or drive anyone anywhere, but I decided (given the hostile nature of some conversations we had) just to leave them alone.

*Always polishing your own halo, she thought. Why be telling me what you almost did?*

best,  
se7en

p.s. i was writing a note to my godson lawrence yesterday & (since he is working retail this summer vacation) i thought i'd tell him about some

of my summer jobs & college jobs. i don't think i ever told you about them, e11even, so i'm going to paste some of my note to him in here— BUT FIRST LET ME SAY VERY ENTHUSIASTICALLY, 'GOOD WORK WITH YOUR WRITING! YOU CAN USE THAT LETTER YOU WROTE TO ME AS PART OF A CHAPTER OF YOUR MEMOIRS!' anyway, here's what i wrote to lawrence:

i also had a huge number of weird jobs during most terms & summers. pay was very low back then (LESS than a dollar an hr usually) but things cost less (a good used car might only be \$200 & gasoline was about 25 cents per gallon). working in the campus libraries (plural—some specialty branch libraries were in different bldgs) was fun & useful as far as learning off the wall facts. in the chem library, I read several ph.d. dissertations about failed attempts to synthesize hydrocarbon compounds: imagine getting a doctorate just for showing that you can't make something by using a certain technique?! (one prof here in my dept got HIS ph.d. for just such nutty research!) i also worked for buildings & grounds one summer, drilling holes around elm trees to pour fertilizer into (nearly broke both wrists when the auger caught a stone & kept going down, while the shut-off switch wouldn't shut off—no one was nearby & i had to hold it till the electric motor burned out). most of the older b&g employees were concerned that I was 'working too hard.' they wanted to punch in early & punch out late but do as little work as possible—hanging out in the 'equipment barn' for at least 30 mins. before starting any work & leaving the work an hour or more early to 'get the equipment back to the barn.' ('slow down, son,' said a tractor driver with the ironic nickname of SPEED. 'you'll work yourself out of a job!') weeding a millionaire's corn fields & building hay stacks for his little herd of cows was another great job i had. the chief weird thing was one day he & his wife were trying to decide which of their four cars (3 caddies & one buick) to drive into town, & it was decided by the fact that three had dog hairs on the front seat & one was clean.

*Funny, she thought. I'll tell him it's funny.* She scrolled to the end of his long letter and scrolled back. *Not much more to go.*

here's what may be a murder story, e11even (i'm pasting this on from an earlier note i sent to lawrence about 2 months ago when he wrote me about taking zoology & working with lab mice (I THINK IT ALSO PERTAINS TO WHY SOME BAD STUFF HAPPENS TO NICE FOLKS WHO ARE SQUARE):

back in 1953-54, when I was in 7th grade, our teacher took us to the biology dept. of the univ. of okla. (where my folks worked in other depts.). we were all offered white mice by dept., & I took 3 after I'd built

a 4-room 2-story cage with a ramp & tiny sliding doors for them. they got along fine together, so I got a 4th mouse a week later. the newest mouse, which was slightly larger than the others, had a peculiar, tipsy gait. the others stayed away from it all day long, actually moving far out of its way whenever it approached. the next morning, the large new mouse was dead & showed signs of having been bitten in many places. i have no idea what really happened, but i assumed they had all jumped it & killed it in its sleep because it was ‘different’—probably i based this partly on similar ganging-up behavior i had seen in my grade-school classmates—& have seen scores of times since, everywhere i’ve worked. (if i’d had true scientific curiosity about biology, i’d have hurried back for another defective mouse & watched more closely what the home team did to welcome it.) of course it’s possible that it was sick & died of natural causes & was merely tasted by the others, but I like my other assumption better. a few yrs later, when i was a college freshman, one day i was looking out of my dorm at other students walking out of the dorm in various directions to classes or wherever & thought of myself & them as being very much like the lab mice, living in cages & being subjects for some unknown beings’ experiments—& i wrote a 4-line poem to that effect, which the campus lit. mag. printed. it was my one & only attempt to wax poetic. i guess we could say i’m a sort of one-hit wonder. here it is:

man or  
all day long ‘they’ test our skills  
in different kinds of mazes.  
by night a few of us are killed,  
the rest returned to cages.

(quoted from memory, since my 2 printed copies went the way of all flesh, so to speak. i know it doesn’t exactly rhyme, but my english teacher came up to me in the library after it was printed & told me HE thought it was really good.)

Ava-Lynn frowned slightly and glanced from her computer screen to the neatly typed and framed poem Barry had given her early in his courtship:

MAN OR  
Each day “they” test with varying mazes  
The limits of our skills.  
Each night we’re placed back in our cages  
—Or else are killed.

He has rehung it in her new home office two years ago, while helping with her move from central Connecticut to the northern coast of South Carolina. This version, too, had been “reconstructed from memo-

ry,” Barry had said, “since my only two copies have ‘gone the way,’ so to speak—along with much else,” which was his far too frequent shorthand for “they were destroyed by my first wife—just for spite.”

She sighed. *Is he losing it?* she thought. *He doesn’t even have a copy of the version he made me? Wonder how many other “reconstructions” he’s tried. Wonder if anybody has a “real” copy of it anywhere—not that it matters much.* She shrugged and resumed reading:

ANYWAY, E11EVEN, KEEP UP WITH YOUR WRITING! YOU TOLD A VIVID STORY—ONE THAT MAKES ME WANT TO TRACK DOWN DOM & BREAK HIS XXXX-ING FACE!

Ava-Lynn smiled. She had predicted this response from her ex. As for the discussion about his lab mice and his theory of human nature, she had skipped through it rapidly, having heard Barry tell it all in virtually the same words, to her and to others, on at least five earlier occasions.

She was pleased with his encouragement about her writing, as well as the explosive response it had provoked—and yet a tiny bit disappointed. She had also predicted that Barry, upon learning of Dom’s behavior, would repeat another of his pet theories, one she had heard many, many times but which she now wanted in writing—to copy verbatim and quote in her revision/expansion of her narrative. To the best of her recollection, it went something like this: “People in positions of power often hurt other people for the same two reasons male dogs lick their balls: partly because it makes them feel good, but chiefly just because they can.” *Or did he say “supervisors”—and “subordinates”?* she wondered.

At 9:25 that evening, mildly surprised at the unwonted quickness of her response, Barry read Ava-Lynn’s reply, subject-titled “New thoughts”:

Dear Vii, Thanx for your wonderful encouragement. Here is some twofold good news: First but not least, you don’t have to stalk Dom DelSesto and thrash him within an inch. What made me stir and write you my tale in the first place was in last Saturday’s mail came the latest Witherspoon Alumni Bulletin, with a notice that Dom passed away on March 31st after “a long heroic battle with lung cancer - survived by his loving widow, his five loving children and his 14 loving grandchildren” and all such horse-ish that they always write. And it is generated by the hype of the truly insensitive, uninformed and egregiously selfish. Would you agree? I just wish I was in a position where they would some day (but not soon I hope) write such “ish” about moi! Secondly this gives me the “happy ending” fact I can use when I revise my tale - as per your good advice!

BTW did I ever tell you that you have a funny way with words? I



think you should send your little tale about the car with the three dog hairs on the seat to Reader's Digest - or some other magazine. It has got a lot of human interest and many people should get a huge "kick" out of it. Wouldn't you say? ELLEVEN

P.S. I'll be flying to Hartford in three weeks and staying with friend Christianna from the 19th to the 25th. Leave space on your dance card for lunch or dinner on the 22nd. You've got her number, I've got yours and we'll make plans for a long sit downy at our favorite Greek diner. Pray that my little package for your Geburtstag won't frighten the airport security experts - or you, birthday boy!!

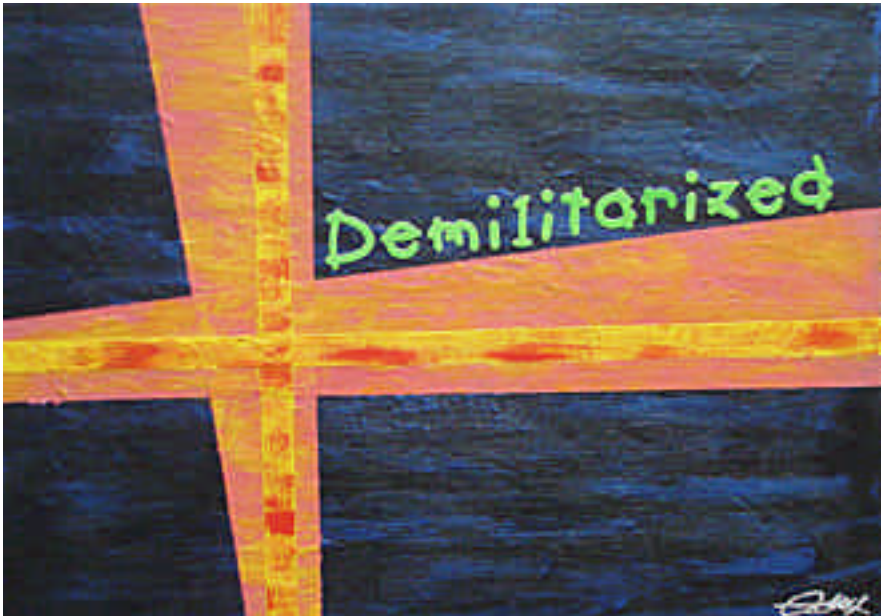
P.P.S. Tell me again, bitte, your theory about dogs that give themselves a licking and bosses that give a licking to employees.

"Three—three *dog hairs*?" he whispered to himself, picturing a long Tudor-style garage with a row of three old shiny Cadillacs inside.

*She's losing it, he thought. In her old age, this woman is definitely losing it. How does she still cross the street alone?*

Smiling—and shaking his head slowly—Barry marked his calendar with a red pencil.

And in mid-October he would be flying down to Myrtle Beach with gifts for her.



The Short Existence of Bomarsund, art by Aaron Wilder



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