



Ink²⁰⁰⁶
Waves
the spirit of literary adventure

Ink Waves

A Collection of MSOE Student Creative Writing

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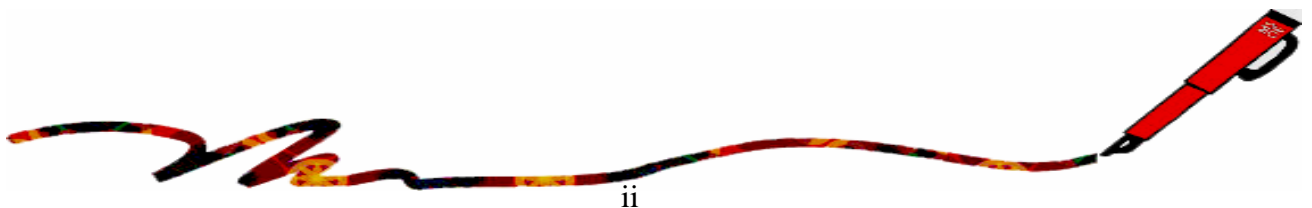


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General Studies Contest Winners Thank you for your submissions!

First Place "Dear Professor" Aaron Hinkfuss

Dear Professor,

If all has gone well, my friend has, at my direction, delivered this letter into your hands. I trust that you are as well as you were the last time we met. Unfortunately, life has decided to deal me a slightly crueller hand.

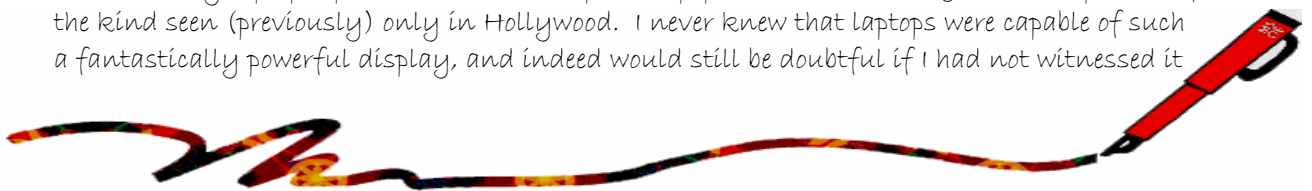
Allow me to start from the beginning. I wish not to use pen and ink for this exposition, but circumstances force me to do otherwise. I suppose it was for exercises such as this that the art of handwriting was so vigorously enforced in my early years. I can see that the sands of time have certainly had a degrading effect upon this skill. Perhaps, in the future, I will regain it. My only hope is that its legibility is sufficient for the purposes of this letter.

Anyway, enough digression. Today began as normal a day as one could imagine—to wit, it was just like any other winter day: I awoke early to a bright morning sun, made my way to the kitchen for a cup of coffee, and tripped over the cat in the process. As I doubt that you would find the specifics of my morning routine very interesting, allow me to be light on the remaining details here. What matters is that, in due time, I got around to my daily breakfast.

I was enjoying my meal quite thoroughly, eating it in my typical leisurely fashion, when I noticed that I had left my laptop on the far end of the table after I had finished with it yesterday night. (How I did not notice it earlier I do not know, but that matters little.) Normally, I pack it in my bag before turning in. I find that I am less apt to forget it that way.

I stood, intending to fix this minor irregularity. Yet, my feet remained firmly in place when I attempted to take a step. A queer thought in the back of my mind told me that I would regret approaching that small black square. I've followed my premonitions—or "gut feelings," as some would call them—before (and your tests are not excluded from this), and they've generally proven to be reliable. So, nearly immediately after standing, I sat once again and resumed my breakfast.

And then my laptop exploded. Not a mere spark or pop, but an honest-to-goodness explosion of the kind seen (previously) only in Hollywood. I never knew that laptops were capable of such a fantastically powerful display, and indeed would still be doubtful if I had not witnessed it





myself. But I can say with clear conscience that, had they also witnessed it, it would have been the envy of any special-effects director.

Before I proceed, allow me to assuage any worry you may have, Professor. In no way did I suffer bodily harm from the explosion, for although impressive, it was of sufficient distance from me that I was out of danger. The same can not be said of the table, though. Had I actually approached the laptop as I had intended, I fear that the results may have far worse than the destruction of a mere piece of furniture (excluding, of course, the victim in all of this—the laptop itself). For that, I can thank that odd premonition that caused me to waylay my actions. I know not its origins, but I would like to think it some sort of divine intervention on my behalf, to save me from physical injury (or worse, but let us not be morbid).

Unfortunately, although I am physically sound, the same cannot be said of my mental state. My beloved laptop now lies in utter ruin, a charred, shattered shadow of what it once was. Indeed, to the casual observer, its remains are not even recognizable as what was once a computer. I made an attempt to gather the many pieces that issued forth from the destruction, but it was only an exercise in futility. I could no longer hold back my tears after recovering the twenty-third piece. That, and I have no means of reaching the few shards that have found a home in my ceiling.

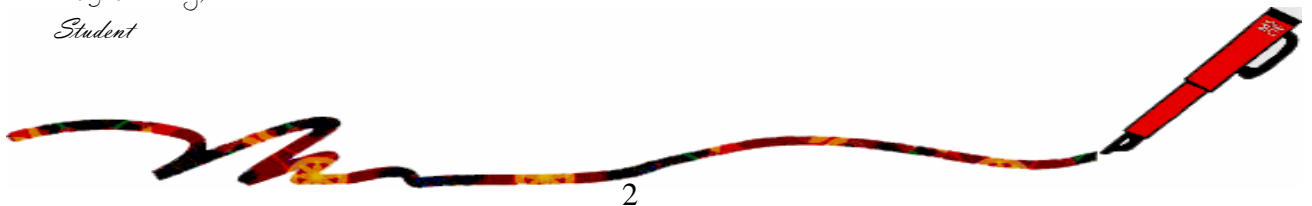
To some, such an event may be seen only as a mere monetary setback, and to them my sorrow would be unwarranted, even illogical. But you are not one of those, Professor, so I trust you will understand that this travesty has shaken me to the very core of my being. That laptop was not merely a tool used for education and entertainment. It was much more than that—it was a part of me.

Perhaps “part of me” is too strong a wording; “an extension of myself” may be more fitting. It may be said that I was a fool to be so attached to an inanimate object, but I was nonetheless a happy fool. You see, that computer never left my side. No matter the task at hand, I was always able to employ its services, so much so that doing anything without it felt unnatural. Losing it is like a carpenter losing his hammer, or a handyman his duct tape. No, that is not good enough; it is as though I have lost my right hand.

The shock of this sudden burden is far too great for me to presently bear. My spirit has been crushed, destroyed by an explosion for which the cause will likely never be known. I know that I will recover, that I will learn to adjust my way of life to cope with this, but it will not be today. I am exhausted both mentally and emotionally, and writing this letter has taken the very last of what little willpower I have remaining.

And that, dear Professor, is why I cannot possibly attend class today.

Regrettably,
Student





SECOND PLACE
"Twas a Night Off Campus"
Matt Duffy

Twas a night off campus
And all through the house
Nothing was stirring
Except for a mouse

This mouse was connected
To my laptop with USB
With hopes that my roommate
Would win with ease

The game was online poker
And my laptop he used
For his was in CCSD
Because it blew a fuse

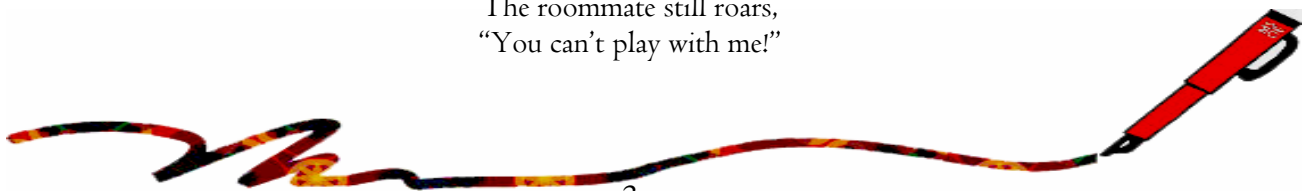
Five cards with your two
That's the Hold 'Em way
My roommate clicks the mouse
All night and all day

The room gets tense
And the yelling begins
"I dare you to fold
because I'm all-in!"

"Chill out, Roommate!"
I say and I belt,
"It's only a tournament
Where the winner takes \$12!"

It was right then
An online stranger called his hand,
"Two eights against my aces?
Those cards will not stand!"

Here comes the flop
Two jacks and a three
The roommate still roars,
"You can't play with me!"





The fourth or the turn
Is the next card to flip?
“The turn is a queen,
My aces have it! I’m rich!”

There’s two percent chance
The stranger gets an eight
Roommate continues to gloat,
“I’m gonna win! I can’t wait!”

Here is the river card
It is the last card, you know
Low and behold
An eight is shown!!!

Cuss words are flying
My roommate's gone mad
Objects are being thrown
Oh, it’s so sad

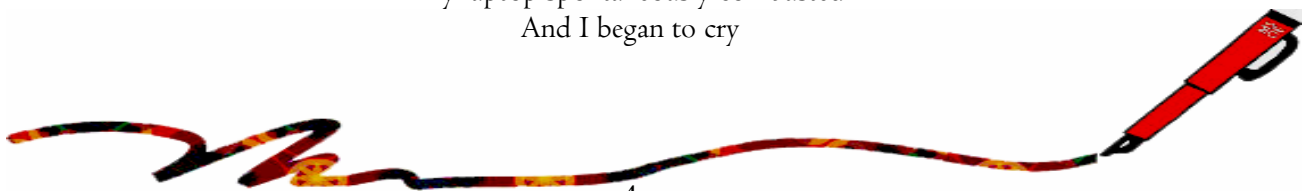
Then it happened
I can hardly abide
To recall the mayhem
Please let me hide!

Roommate’s fist was clenched
His eyes filled with rage
“That son of a gun took my money!
Now, he will pay!”

“Omit the irrationality.
Forgo the pain.
That is my laptop.
You see, it has my name.”

The fist plunged downward
Onto the keys
There was nothing I could do
But get to my knees

Shards hit the fan
Sparks started to fly
My laptop spontaneously combusted
And I began to cry





I have witnessed two events
My face can show it
A poker freak lost
And then my laptop exploded

There go my documents
There go my tunes
I can't believe he punched my keyboard
That's awfully rude

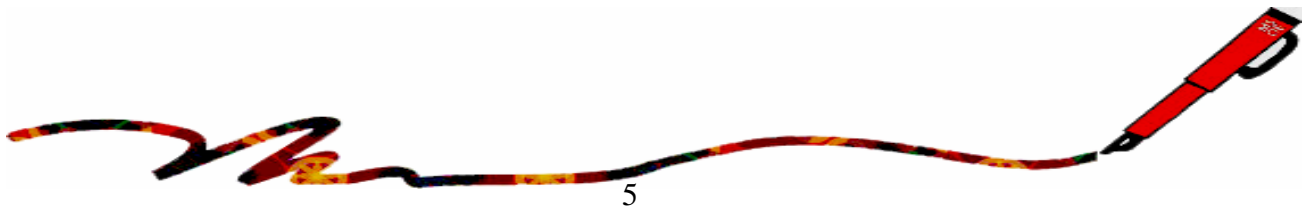
After the smoke has cleared
And the tears have passed
I say to Roommate sincerely
"It's time for anger management class

"As you can see
There is nothing but ash
How could a cheap poker game
Lead you to bash?

"I will need your money
Every last drop
It is seven hundred fifty
For a lost or stolen laptop"

From that day forth
I can never lend
Such a piece of equipment
To a relative or friend

For those who have the courage
To share with their might
Don't let them play poker
So all may have a good night.





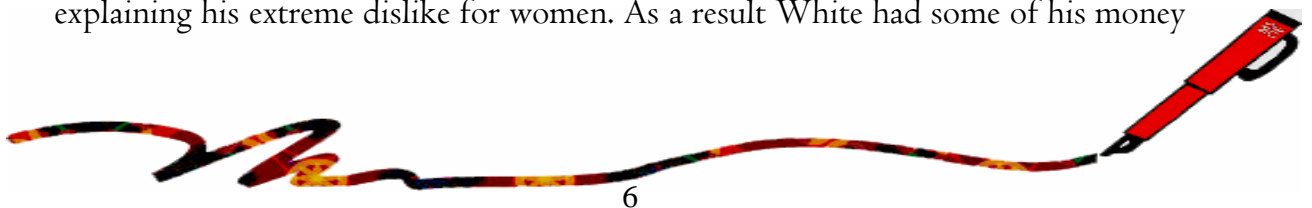
THIRD PLACE
"Black and White"
Andy Salzwedel

The entire time I was thinking to myself "Why me...why now?" It would seem that a series of ill-fated events had overtaken me. Five days previously I had been on top of the world. Grades were good, women were prevalent, and the cash was flowing. Life as Max Black was great.

It all started with the grades. Everything we were developing at Black Corp. was turning out grade A. My engineers couldn't miss, the products kept rolling out, and women everywhere were eating them up. Everything from lipstick that changed color at the push of a button, to clothing that transformed from winter to summer styles, was getting scooped up everywhere. There was no question that the money was great, but it was the fame that was driving me to new levels of ecstasy. Never before in my life had I felt so important, so loved.

Unfortunately everyone didn't love me. Enter White, Joe White that is. Now let me tell you a little something about a Mr. Joe White. Here we have our classic male chauvinist who can't stand the idea of another man making products for women and especially one doing a good job of it. "That's women's business," according to him. The question was, "Why was there such animosity towards the subject?" Five hundred dollars and a detective straight from the books got me my answer.

At one point in his life Joe White was what you might call a nerd. In high school he found himself spending most of his time playing video games. Software engineering became a strong interest of his, eventually leading to his enrollment into the Milwaukee School of Engineering. White's nerdy life continued at MSOE up until the point he stumbled upon quite the discovery. White managed to develop a software program for his senior design project that allowed a person to train eye-hand coordination. White started testing it and discovered that it did a really good job. White started participating in sports and noticed vast improvement compared to his previous lack of skills. The idea got out and soon White found himself a rich man with the backing of athletes around the world. At this point White was missing one thing in his life, a woman. Despite all his newfound money and fame, White failed miserably with women, and to this day, this is his ultimate short-coming, explaining his extreme dislike for women. As a result White had some of his money

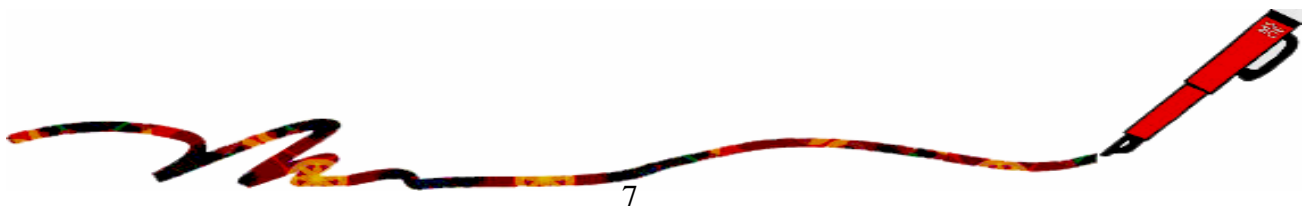




invested in companies which attacked women, in rather discrete ways. One of these companies tested female products and attempted to run them off the market.

Suddenly it seemed like everything I created was being tested and ridiculed by White. Soon my successes were being overturned by White. Lawsuits ensued, and I was on a downward spiral towards doom. I find myself sitting at my desk working late on my laptop, going over all my current projects, most of which are red-flagged. I hear a loud knock at the door. Now who could possibly be knocking at this hour? I hear from a somewhat gruff voice “FBI, open up!” This can’t be happening to me, “Why me...why now?” I panic, grab my laptop and scramble for the back door. They must have heard me because the next thing I know my front door is splinters and several black coated men are barging in. I get to the back door and make a run for it. I have always been a good runner and find myself out distancing them. I find a good hiding spot and decide to wait it out. I hear voices in the near distance. So there I am, clutching my precious laptop, with the FBI of all people, after me. Suddenly my cell phone rings! What horrible timing. I try and grab it as quickly as possible, and suddenly I find myself on my back from the concussion of a fiery blast, dazed and confused. I look down at my chest to see my laptop exploded and there, twenty-five feet in front of me, a dark clad man with a smoking gun barrel. I roll over in pain to see my cell phone flipped and hear a voice on the other line, “There will be no more women for you Black, not where you are going...”

THE END

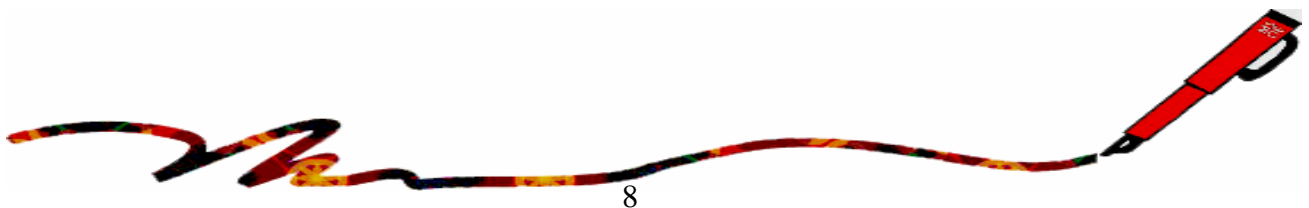




HONORABLE MENTION
"A Greek Tragedy"
Professor Agamemnon
Department of Engineering Literature

Let me begin by saying that history is NOT my favorite subject. If it were, I would not be studying to be an engineer; more specifically, a software engineer. I was enrolled last academic year in a course called World History, which, at least, I found tolerable. When I was in high school, I had to take a similar course called Global History. Mr. Bannel was not really a history teacher at Lake Kellogg High School; he was actually the men's swimming coach. Sure, he spent more time teaching history than coaching, but that was just a formality. Torturing us or an entire year with his whiskey-whipped, raspy, monotone voice was just his ostensible reason for existing; coaching the swim team was what he actually lived for. He usually came to class in the afternoon after having partaken of a liquid lunch (most likely single-malt Scotch, if my olfactory senses were correct). He then proceeded to read the textbook to us for the first half of the class (yup, he just read straight from the textbook) and then had us write up answers for the questions at the end of the chapter while he sat at his desk enjoying what was left of his buzz. He would then "grade" our answers, although his grading system must have been formulated by some partially brain-dead monkey because none of us could figure it out. And his exams—suffice it to say, the same monkey must have written those as well.

Thus, my background in history was not quite up to snuff when I matriculated into my current university two years ago. I put off taking the required World History course as long as I could for that reason, but the first September of my junior year was the time of reckoning, and I could put it off no longer. God must have been smiling upon me because it was not as bad as I thought it would be. At least it was taught by a professor with a degree in history who actually knew what the hell he was talking about, and if he did drink single-malt Scotch, he did so on his own time and not while on campus. I was hardly won over as a convert to the discipline of history, but at least I found it more interesting. Moreover, in manner I had not intended, I also found it extremely useful. The professor who taught the class was particularly fascinated with the Greeks, and in addition to making his students read several Greek tragedies, we had to read a book on the nature of Greek drama.





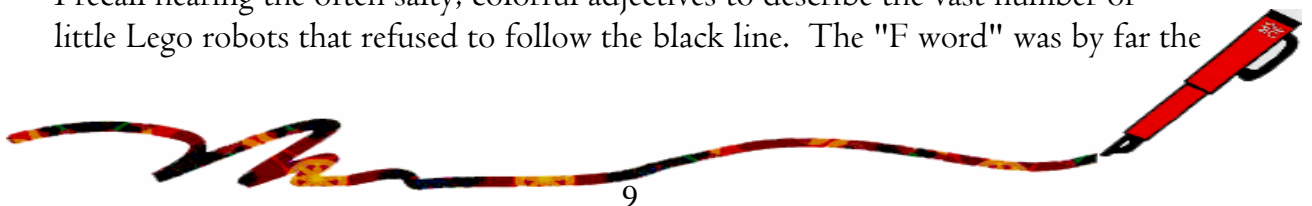
Why did I find this useful? Because of the language of Greek drama. Yes, the ancient Greeks not only wrote plays; they developed an entire vocabulary to describe the stories that they acted out during the festivals in honor of Dionysus, the patron god of the theater. What was useful about this? Two days ago, I had an experience that I am not likely to ever forget. In fact, it was so unique, that my normal vocabulary is inadequate to describe it.

Instead, the language of Sophocles and Aeschylus must be employed in order to relate what is a contemporary Greek tragedy, the scale of which (in y own mind anyway) is of Olympian proportions.

Drama: Tragedy was, of course, one of the two flavors of drama that existed in ancient Greece (the other being comedy). The word "drama" is derived from the Greek verb dran, or "to do": drama in Greek means "action." And I got more action than I bargained for this semester when I agreed to work with Kurt Cunningham (or "KC" as he preferred to be called) as my partner in a course titled SOEN 456: Software Design for Embedded Systems. KC is not a software engineer like me; his is majoring in computer engineering. However, at the university we attend, software and computer engineers both take classes in the Computer Science and Software Engineering Department. The course was required for me; KC took it as an elective. Computer engineers had to take a similar course called COEN 352: Embedded Computer Systems.

COEN 352 required them to purchase an insidious Lego kit that included wheels, motors, a circuit board, a little light-sensitive eye that could follow a black line, and (of course) Legos. Computer engineering students would have to build this little Lego robot, put together the circuit board, and program it to follow a black line on the floor. I recall many times walking past the lab where the computer engineers built their little Lego robots for COEN 352. The lab was in the windowless basement of Cosgrove Hall. Painted in the cheerless color of landlord beige, the whole building exuded the dark, melancholic spirit of some medieval dungeon. This was exacerbated by the fact that these diabolic little Lego robots turned normally sane and mentally balanced college students into madmen (and occasionally madwomen) as they worked for hours to make their little Lego robots follow the black lines on the floor.

I recall hearing the often salty, colorful adjectives to describe the vast number of little Lego robots that refused to follow the black line. The "F word" was by far the





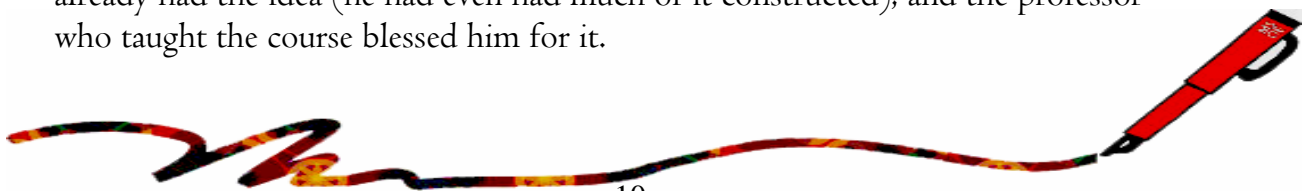
most common, but other such Anglo-Saxon monosyllable could be heard as well. Many students who found themselves at the ends of their tethers often found it necessary to refer to their little robot as the spawn of a female canine (I think you know what I am getting at) when other phrases failed to adequately express their rage. Hard to believe that something as joyful to a child as Legos can make a rational, young adult go absolutely insane.

Well, SOEN 456 was sort of like COEN 352 in that it dealt with embedded software systems. To put this into layman's terms, an "embedded system" is a software program used to make an electronic device with a very limited amount of memory work. A cell phone, for example, has a software program that makes it work, as do the various brands of palm pilots on the market.

Most little electronic devices have an embedded software system; that is why software engineers need to learn to design them, and therefore they take courses like SOEN 456. Computer engineers, on the other hand, are supposed to learn all of what they need to know about embedded software systems in COEN 352. KC wanted to learn more. No . . . that isn't right. He already believed he knew everything there was to know, and he wanted to show the world his abilities.

Hubris: This word, in Greek, translates best as "arrogance," and in many Greek tragedies, it is the principal cause of the main character's downfall. This was particularly true of the Greek playwright Aeschylus, whose characters experienced personal tragedies due to their excessive pride. For example, one of Aeschylus's most well-known works was *The Persians*. I only read a little of it, but it revolved around a Persian king named Xerxes who took this huge army into Greece and got the crap kicked out of him by a much smaller number of Greeks. I think some Greek gods like Zeus or Hephaestus had something to do with it, too. Hell . . . I don't remember . . . they may have been named Myopia, Anorexia, and Gonorrhoea: the Greek gods of bad eyesight, poor eating habits, and painful urination (get it? . . . Ba Ding!).

But I digress. KC exhibited hubris when choosing the project we had to complete. I have to admit, I did not push very hard for any other project, largely because I had not thought about it at all before I enrolled in the course. KC, on the other hand, knew exactly what he wanted to do long before he enrolled. I acquiesced because he already had the idea (he had even had much of it constructed), and the professor who taught the course blessed him for it.





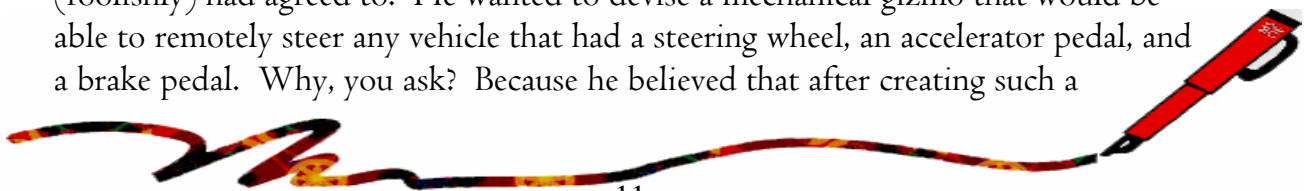
I wish now that we would have taken on some less splashy (and less destructive project) like programming some remote controlled toy or a microwave oven. But, alas, the gods who control engineering students' projects did not smile upon us. I don't know what the ancient Greeks called it when the gods did not smile upon them. "Up-the-creek-without-a-paddle" is what I call it.

I must admit, however, that KC's idea was not all bad. It may have been a bit over-the-top and unrealistic, but a lot of projects are like that. I was willing to put together something that would fulfill the course requirements; KC wanted to put together something that would put him on the map of the engineering profession. He, in a sense, is an engineer's engineer; he loves all facets of engineering. The problem, of course, is that you cannot master all of these in four years of college. By taking electives in a strategic manner, KC had tried to master all of them; but the reality was that by his senior year, he had really only mastered computer engineering. However, he believed he was the early 21st century's version of Leonardo da Vinci, and that is where his hubris entered the drama.

I remember talking to KC one time about da Vinci. He believed da Vinci was one of the greatest engineers who ever lived, but not THE greatest. Why not? Because, KC insisted, da Vinci had designed some great inventions, but he never took the critical step of actually building them. For example, da Vinci sketched the first parachute, but never made one; he sketched the first true ball bearing, but never constructed it; he designed the earliest military tank, but never made his sketch a reality; he designed the first helicopter, machine gun, glider, and a plethora of other innovations that he never actually built. That, in KC's mind, was da Vinci's greatest sin: his failure to build what he had sketched on paper. And KC would go beyond da Vinci by actually building EVERY gizmo that he had ever imagined. Thus, he believed he would one day SURPASS da Vinci.

I applauded his drive, but not his common sense . . . he did not have much of the latter. He certainly was not stupid . . . not by a long shot. He was, as I said, an engineer's engineer; but while the Good Lord had blessed him with ample brains, He had neglected to round out those smarts with the usual dose of maturity that you are supposed to have when you reach the age of 21.

I will summarize, in layman's terms, the project that KC proposed, and which I (foolishly) had agreed to. He wanted to devise a mechanical gizmo that would be able to remotely steer any vehicle that had a steering wheel, an accelerator pedal, and a brake pedal. Why, you ask? Because he believed that after creating such a



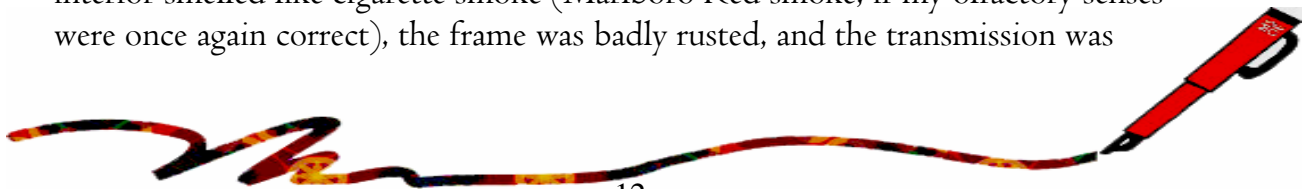
machine, he could sell a prototype to the Defense Department. The U.S. Army and the Marine Corps could then use these machines to drive convoys in Iraq and Afghanistan, and this, he reasoned, would virtually end all the deaths that the United States forces suffered due to IEDs (or improvised explosive devices).

Of course, the idea that our project could save even one soldier's life in Iraq was one of the factors that lulled me (as well as the professor) into believing that this project was a good idea. That was four months ago, when the semester had first started. Now, in the cold of mid-December, far removed from the sunny, gay, and seemingly blissful days of late August when the semester began, I realized what a naive person I was at the time. Wait . . . did I say "naive person"? This is not quite accurate: "Naive, imprudent, obtuse idiot" is a much more accurate description.

Theater: The word "theater" is derived from the Greek word theatron, which contains the stem of the verb theasthai, which means "to view as spectators." Well, that perfectly describes how KC and I demonstrated our final project. KC decided that the best way to demonstrate the gizmo would be to have it drive a real car, which, he argued, would not be much different than driving a military truck. He knew some guy who had worked in a transportation unit in the army.

This guy told KC that the average military vehicle, like a HUMMV (or Hummer, as it is affectionately known), is similar to most cars on the market because it has automatic transmission and power steering. Thus, KC believed that any car with these features would be perfect for our project. He managed to get a 1991 light brown Plymouth Acclaim from his uncle. His uncle's name—and I swear I am not making this up—is Augustine Jelinski, or "Augie J" as KC calls him. I had met him once, and I swear, people in Poland are not as Polish as this guy. Not surprisingly, he lives on the west side of Chicago, and his favorite football team—I also swear I am not making this up—is "da Bears." I mean, when i was a little kid, I watched the old Saturday night Live reruns where they had the Chciago Polacks (please excuse the ethnic slur; I use it only for emphasis) who all talked about "da Bears" and "Ditka" while eating kielbasa. Well, Augie J should have been on the show; in fact, I think they designed the characters after seeing him.

Once again . . . I digress. I am not sure why Augie J gave us the car; probably because he could not have gotten more than fifty bucks for it as a trade in; the interior smelled like cigarette smoke (Marlboro Red smoke, if my olfactory senses were once again correct), the frame was badly rusted, and the transmission was





starting to go. The stains on the seats indicated that Augie J regularly partook of a few fine meals from McDonald's and Taco Bell (at least I HOPED that was what the stains were). I think once we got it, the damn car was on its last legs, although Augie J told us if it was still working when we were done with it, he would like it back. It only had to get us through the project, I kept telling myself . . . and it would, unfortunately.

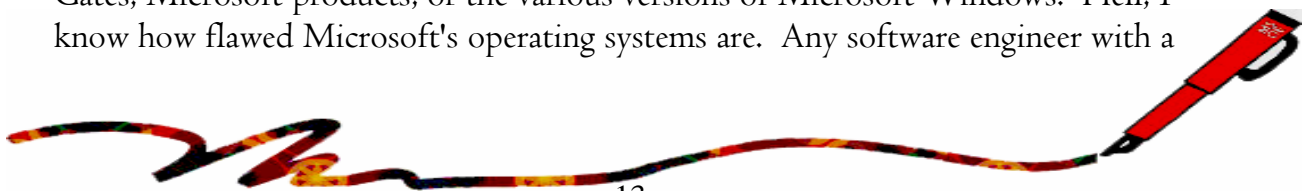
Tragedy: Of all the words in Greek drama, the word "tragedy" is by far the most interesting. It is derived from the word trag, which means "goat," and oide, which means "singing." Thus, the word "tragedy" literally translates as "goat singing." Yes . . . that is actually what it means. And think about it. When something really bad happens, people respond with plaintive wails and cries of despair that sound quite a bit like "goat singing." I know that is how I sounded the day KC and I demonstrated our project before the spectators who constituted our theater.

KC had actually built the device that would control the Plymouth. It was a rather impressive gizmo. He had constructed a box-like frame from half inch square aluminum stock that he bolted together. He then attached the various motors, circuit boards, radio receiver, and other parts to the frame. The gizmo had two pneumatic arms that controlled the steering wheel, and two pneumatic pistons that controlled the gas and brake pedals. It sat on the driver's seat, and we even were able to seatbelt it in for stability. KC had found some mechanical engineer he knew from a local company to help him get the parts and build it. My job, of course, was to design the software to make it follow the commands it was given.

It was, in KC's mind, simply a larger version of the Lego robot he had built in COEN 352. This is where the tragedy comes in.

Like virtually every student in the Computer Science and Software Engineering Department at my university, I had my own laptop computer. KC had one, too. However, I had Windows XP as my operating system; KC had reimaged his computer and started from scratch by loading Linux on his hard drive. Why, you ask? Because KC did not want to become (and I am quoting him verbatim here) a "slave of Billy Gates."

Let me say first that KC was not the first person I had ever met who did not like Bill Gates, Microsoft products, or the various versions of Microsoft Windows. Hell, I know how flawed Microsoft's operating systems are. Any software engineer with a





modicum of brains knows that Microsoft's products are deeply flawed—and I mean EVERY ONE of them. No one who can avoid using Microsoft's Internet Explorer uses it because it lets in more viruses than the Centers for Disease Control.

So, KC had developed HIS OWN operating system for his laptop. Personally, I think it was just a slightly modified version of Linux, but I never examined his computer up close, so I cannot be sure. Either way, the point was he did not use Windows. He said that Windows and other Microsoft products were like "heroin . . . once you start using them, you get addicted."

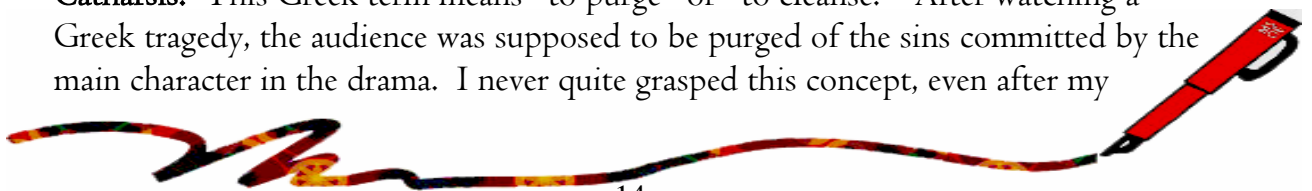
Maybe this is true, but he was hardly "clean and sober" in this regard, and he appeared at times to go through periods of "withdrawal." Let me explain. The embedded system he wanted to develop for the gizmo he had built had to be completely compatible with Microsoft Windows. "Why?" I asked. KC said, "Because everyone uses Windows, including the Department of Defense." I countered, "But you do not like Windows, or any other Microsoft product made by the 'Satanic One.'" (This was KC's moniker for Bill Gates). "Yes," KC admitted, but I cannot escape the reality that the Satanic One has a virtual monopoly on the operating systems in this world, and therefore, we have to develop an embedded system that will be compatible with the various versions of Windows." Thus, using my laptop, I began to develop the embedded software that would make the gizmo work.

I will not bore you with all the details of the program that I labored over to make our project work. Suffice it to say, it was a royal pain. The programming would not have been nearly as bad if KC had not only reviewed everything I did but also made changes when he thought it was necessary (and thus, the seeds of tragedy were sown . . . more to come on this).

In summation, because the embedded program had to be compatible with Windows, and because my laptop used Windows, my computer, by default, was the one used to demonstrate our gizmo.

This, in the end, led to the tragedy I will now describe: the death of my \$2500 laptop computer.

Catharsis: This Greek term means "to purge" or "to cleanse." After watching a Greek tragedy, the audience was supposed to be purged of the sins committed by the main character in the drama. I never quite grasped this concept, even after my

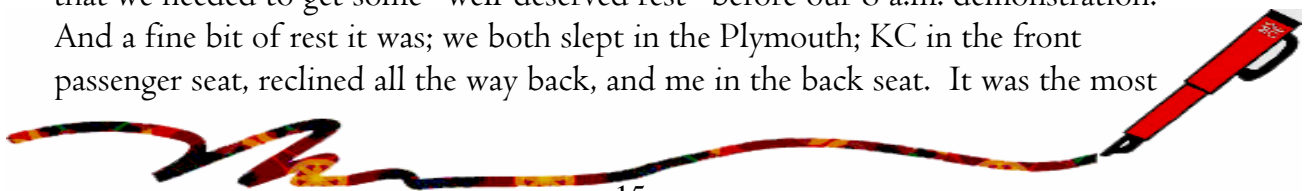


World History professor explained it. Perhaps it was the example he used. When defining the Greek concept of "catharsis," he referenced the play Oedipus Rex by Sophocles. As most people probably know, this play is about a young man who unknowingly kills his father, then unknowingly marries his mother, and to make up for these twin evils, he stabs his eyeballs out. My professor said that the end result produced a "catharsis," or purging of these sins from the audience members. Now, I don't know about you, but I have never had even the remotest desire to kill my father, engage in incest with my mother, or gouge my eyes out. I guess the ancient Greeks had a lot bigger and more troubling issues in their lives. Sigmund Freud, of course, asserted that all young children desire sexual relations with the parent of the opposite sex and seek to get rid of the parent of the same sex who is the competitor; he called this the Oedipus Complex. Personally, I have my doubts; I experienced NO catharsis after reading Oedipus Rex (although I did feel a deep psychological need to repeatedly shower after I read it . . . gee, maybe Freud was right).

But again . . . I digress. If anyone had a catharsis because of this project, it was KC. I experienced only the tragedy and the "goat singing."

On the appointed day, our professor and the rest of the class assembled in the deserted parking lot on the north end of campus to see how our gizmo would perform. KC, of course, had to be the one to perform the demonstration. There was just one problem: We had not actually tested it fully. Both of us were up the entire night before, getting the gizmo ready. Sure, we could have gotten this done sooner, but our class loads this past semester, combined with the enormity of the project, worked against us from August all the way into early December. KC, of course, had to have the last word on everything, including the programming, which was my bailiwick and not his; this also slowed us down quite a bit since he would change much of what I did without telling me. However, far be it from me, a mere mortal, to second-guess ANY of his sage engineering wisdom. It was for that reason that I usually went back when he wasn't around and undid all of his changes. I think the fact that we were both making changes to the embedded system (usually without the other guy knowing) eventually led to the final, grisly tragedy that morning.

We got the gizmo to work perfectly the night before. The two pneumatic arms that controlled the steering wheel worked, as did the two pneumatic pumps that controlled the gas and brake pedals. KC was satisfied and said at about 5:30 a.m. that we needed to get some "well-deserved rest" before our 8 a.m. demonstration. And a fine bit of rest it was; we both slept in the Plymouth; KC in the front passenger seat, reclined all the way back, and me in the back seat. It was the most



vile night of sleep I had ever had. I would have slept more soundly on top of a bag of gravel for two and a half hours than I did in the back seat of Augie J's Plymouth. The stale cigarette smoke and food stains only made the night that much more "magical" in my eyes.

Well, 8 a.m. came much too soon, and we woke up with just enough time to tuck our shirts in, take a leak along a nearby fence line, and try to look presentable. We had a small card table and two chairs. We had gotten those from Augie J, too; he must have gotten them at the Goodwill, judging by their condition. We set up my laptop on the table along with the transmitter that sent the signals to the gizmo in the Plymouth and began the demonstration. KC started the car. The gizmo was programmed so it automatically depressed the brake pad while the car idled in drive. It would not let up on the brake pad and depress the gas pedal until my computer gave it the signal to do so.

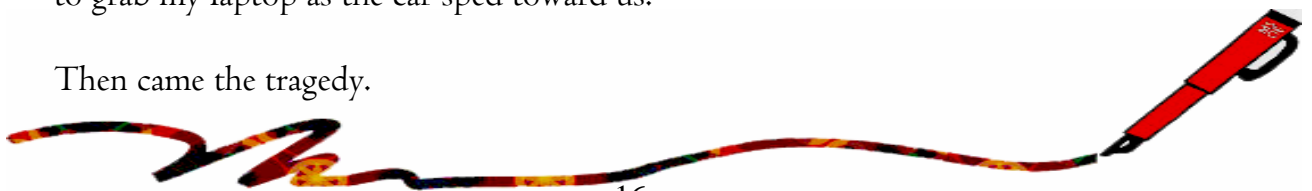
It went okay . . . at first. KC started the car, walked over to the table, and took his seat. Not surprisingly, he took my laptop from me and began to issue the commands to the gizmo. He hit the "enter" key, and very slowly, the car began to creep forward. We looked at each other and smiled in disbelief. The Plymouth slowly picked up speed until it was going about ten miles per hour. KC feverishly typed in the next set of commands so it would turn to the right, and sure enough, it worked!!

What could possibly go wrong? Everything after that.

As the car began to turn, it also began to pick up speed. Why it did so is still heavily debated between KC and me; he blames me and I blame him. Of course, whose fault it was did not matter in the long run—or the short run for that matter. He could not, despite his frantic typing of commands into my computer, get the car to do anything else but continue its right turn and continue to pick up speed. Luckily, the spectators who constituted "the theater" were off a good distance at one end of the empty parking lot. KC and I, on the other hand, were smack dab in the middle of the parking lot with the Plymouth coming right toward us.

For some reason which defies logic, we both waited until the car was about ten yards away before we abandoned our seats at the card table. Of course, there was no time to grab my laptop as the car sped toward us.

Then came the tragedy.





The last thing I remember seeing was the Plymouth hitting the card table. My computer was thrown about twenty feet into the air. I watched it fall; it looked as though it was falling in slow motion. Upon hitting the ground, my laptop exploded. There it lay in a menagerie of shards and pieces. For a software engineer, losing one's computer is a deep, personal loss . . . a true tragedy. It is, in a very real sense, like losing a spouse. The only difference is that a spouse is easily replaced by someone who looks very similar. Losing a laptop is a permanent loss.

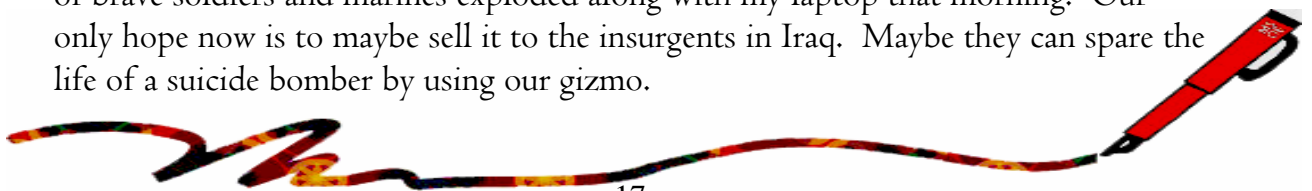
The catharsis came when KC watched the Plymouth slam into an embankment at the end of the parking lot. There, the Plymouth sputtered and gave up the proverbial "ghost." That worthless bucket of bolts simply refused to work anymore. The gizmo's frame was bent all out of shape, and it wouldn't work either. Our professor told us afterward, in an attempt to heal our broken egos, that the Plymouth had performed well enough early on in the demonstration to deem our project "adequate." Thus, we would get a "D" in the course. Yippee . . . I thought . . . a "D" . . . THAT certainly makes it all worth while. I felt like telling the professor, "Don't break your arm patting yourself on the back for doing us such a BIG favor!"

Wait . . . I can't blame him for all this. I mean, I let KC talk me into it. That brings to mind two other words from Greek drama.

Protagonist: This translates literally into English as the "first combatant." That is another way of saying "the good guy." You can believe (if you are evil and warped enough) that KC was the "true" protagonist in this tragedy. You could argue that he was the victim of his own hubris; his own pride. Well, many Greek tragedians such as Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides would have thought so, but have not doubt that in this Greek tragedy, I AM THE PROTAGONIST! I mean, I LOST MY LAPTOP!

KC tried to cheer me up by saying, "Well, don't feel too bad . . . I messed up Augie J's Plymouth." Yeah, that's right KC; losing a car with a Blue Book value in the double digits REALLY compares to the loss of my laptop. Augie J is gonna have a REAL hard time impressing all the girls on the west side of Chicago now, I thought.

Well, the dream of selling our gizmo to the Department of Defense to save the lives of brave soldiers and marines exploded along with my laptop that morning. Our only hope now is to maybe sell it to the insurgents in Iraq. Maybe they can spare the life of a suicide bomber by using our gizmo.





Hell, if they want it, I'll even throw in the Plymouth for an extra ten bucks. Sure, that would be \$20 below its Blue Book value, but at this point, I'll take anything to get rid of it.

Well, it was KC's rather asinine comment about losing Augie J's Plymouth that confirmed in my mind that that I, truly, was the tragic protagonist and he was the . .

Antagonist: This word translates from Greek into the English word "enemy." I would rather have worked with the partially brain-dead monkey who graded Mr. Bannel's exams in high school than with KC. At least then I would still have my laptop, my sanity, and my sobriety. And this leads to the final word from the universe of Greek drama that I will use to describe the Greek tragedy that I experienced . . .

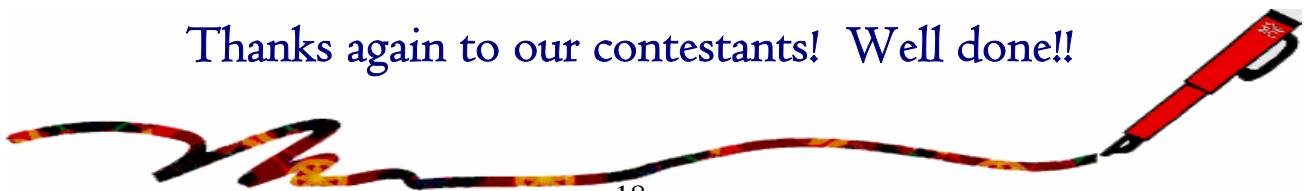
Libation: This is derived from the Greek word *leibein*, which means "to pour." In ancient Greece, people would always pour a little bit of wine on the ground before a meal as an offering to the gods. This was called a libation. Now, of course, people pour the libations right down their throats rather than wasting good liquor on a bunch of pagan gods who don't exist. In the two days since the Plymouth took away my laptop, I have tried to compensate for my loss by drinking many libations. In fact, in honor of Mr. Bannel, my drink of choice is a bottle of fine single-malt Scotch. As I sit here recounting my woes, I am reminded of the lines of *The Libation-Bearers* by Aeschylus:

Mighty Fates, on you we call!
Bid the will of Zeus ordain
Power to those to whom again
Justice turns with hand and aid!

What does this mean, you ask? Hell if I know. It sounds sort of cool, and maybe, just maybe, "Justice will turn with the hand and aid," and Zeus (or some other powerful deity) will kick KC's ass for destroying my laptop.

Bartender . . . another bottle of single-malt, please.

Thanks again to our contestants! Well done!!





Brothers

Monica Block

A brother is someone who causes annoyance
A brother is someone who causes trouble
For truly, he would not be a brother if he didn't
But, fear not, brothers in the world,
There are other, more important, qualities of brothers:

While a brother can be irritating, in the same vein,
He is someone you can be annoying to
Taking whatever you give, with a hidden smile
That you but jest, and loves you regardless

A brother is someone who gladly removes himself from
Knitting, cooking, and shopping, giving girls time to talk
But yet happily educates interested persons in football
And enthusiastically interprets sports statistics upon request

A brother is someone who grows up none too fast,
And soon reaches a size where 60lbs of salt is no big deal to lift
And gladly does the duty of moving such items, not to show off,
But because he just knows he can move them more easily

A brother is someone with whom you can start a 'discussion'
And, on this topic of no relevance,
Will fight you on a point, just for the fun of it
And won't glare at you afterwards for disagreeing with him

A brother is someone who isn't afraid to tell you what he thinks,
And doesn't mind if its not what you're expecting
If that pink sweater looks strange on you,
He'll be there to tell you

Yes, indeed, my brother is my friend
And I hope it stays that way...even after he reads this





Ebb & Flow Margarita Montoya

You yell when you want quiet
 You hurt when there is no pain
 You laugh when you want to cry
 You stress when you have it easy
 You smile when you want to frown
 You love when no one loves you back
 You feel when your everything is numb
 You question when everything is obvious
 You think when you know you should not
 You fear when you feel completely protected
 You mute yourself when you have lots to share
 You speak when you want to hide in the darkness
 You watch the actions of others when you can't see
 You joke when no one around will take you seriously

Murk
 Doubts
 Confusion
 Uncertainty

If thoughts were to suddenly come to a halt, would the stress melt away?
 I hesitate to say yes. I have tried. Thoughts do not just stop. Not easily.
 The fog outside of my window tells me things aren't always so clear.
 Sometimes all I want is an answer to anything. No matter what it is.
 But it is never that easy. I have to dig deep. Within myself. Others.
 I am restless, on edge, unable to fall asleep. I need to get sleep.
 My eyelids weigh heavily from absorbing today's experiences.
 What did I learn today?? A new word? A process? Patience?
 I learned how to make a person smile. How to listen. Laugh.
 There was a stranger outside my door. I did not recognize.
 He pointed things out in this world I hadn't seen before.
 Listening to him brought a new & better feeling to me.
 Such a small man but he possessed so much good.
 Questions were asked. But none were answered.
 A hidden blessing, of sorts – this strange man.
 He had fascinating glasses. Perhaps the key.
 He could make me see things differently.
 Suddenly all things were back to good.
 Rain came thundering at my window.
 All dire things were washed away.
 Everything works out always.
 People are genuinely good.
 Help someone, anyone.

Selflessness
 Humanity
 Sincerity
 Certainty

Thank you, ICE DANCER



From Here to the Desert Brother Meadowlark

There once was a pinprick on the horizon
Black as a pupil, it swallowed all the light it found,
Growing steady, it began to advance.

There once was a young boy with stick in hand
White as a cloud, he sat in the shade of a tree,
Humming softly, he scribbled in the dirt.

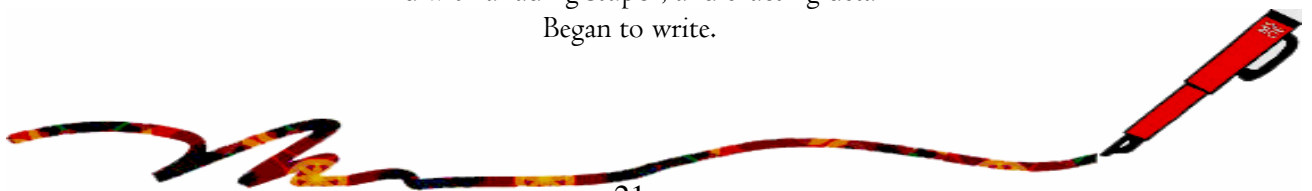
At first it crept, then it walked,
Trotting, running, sprinting, flying forward
Existence evaporated at its touch –
Brooks, meadows, forests, all –
Consumed into ebony.

The growing whisper of the leaves
Seemed to sing warning for all to hear,
As the boy still etching
His preoccupied nonsense into the sand,
Failed to see his horizon racing faster still
Making the leaves cry louder.

Stretching up and out, it tore impossibly forward,
As the boiling skies began to fall,
Mixing with the dirt and grass
All perishing as one.

The angry air cracked through the trees,
Scattering leaves and nonsense everywhere.
His stick abandoned, the boy turned to peer
Down a wave that inhaled his stare.
And with a thundering roar it snatched him as well,
Leaving only inky blackness behind.

His hands still hiding his face, the boy
Opened a hopeful eye.
The world was dead now, a dusty desert
Stretched beyond measure.
Reaching for his trusty stick, the boy kneeled,
And with a fading stupor, and exacting detail
Began to write.





A Letter to Some Admirers..... David Beasley

(Dear Girls in the upper row....)

Oh, hey there--how are ya doing
Didn't mean to catch you off

But I notice you look very nice this evening
Wait! Been...looking very nice!
Noticed you at these hockey games lately
Against St. Norbert, Marian, Crookston..
And oh yeah...Lawrence!

And isn't this your friend?
Seen you around her before
She sat right here by the end!

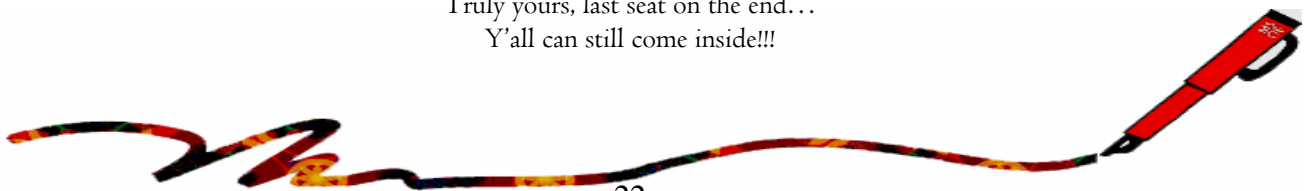
You all look nice
Can't say a pick up line metaphor
Cause for the past few weeks
Bet y'all wondered
"What's he looking at us for?"

I don't want your phone number
Already pushing my buttons!!!!
Hate to make a big scene
Mind if I sit in between?

What's your name? Excuse me, I'm David
Business major, and speaking of which--
Some of my "work" I take too "serious"....
You get it!

It seems as if I took too long
To say all this
Truth is....
Yeah I'm shook, I'll admit it!
The game's about to end
Mind if it's me y'all roll with?
My truck's outside and there's
Plenty of room in my ride

I'm not bragging
Cause it's an old truck
Truly yours, last seat on the end...
Y'all can still come inside!!!





Love, in itself
Margarita Montoya

Beauty fades, moments never

Few know how to love forever

Lying

cheating

Hear the news: another beating

Love another, love thyself

Without love, we can know no wealth

A smile

laugh

half empty

glass

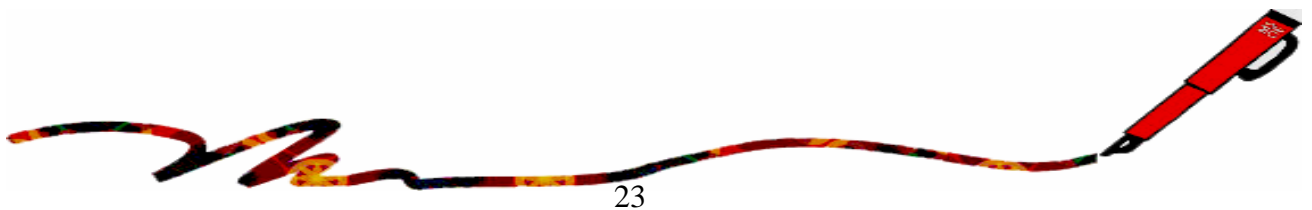
A frown

cry

relief

at last

To love, be loved – there is no greater





Monster Jesse Winkler

a great monster rose out of the night to threaten the land,
and its howls made men shake though hidden in their strongholds
but one man upon hearing those echoes of terror did not shake
the first night he heard the abomination, he began sharpening his sword
he secured his weapons and went out to meet the visage of death
his family called to him, do not go, for who will take care of us if you do not return?
Faith, he called over his shoulder, if I do not challenge this beast then what care do I
offer?

Nay, this must be ended, he said, and with that he disappeared into the night
months passed, but he did not return, but neither had the beast returned
his family assumed that he was slain defending them, and the village mourned his
loss

but then one day he returned, ragged and wounded, but true and stern as the day he
left

the villagers gathered around him as he approached his house, and on his doorstep
he stopped and turned

I found the beast the night I left, and it fled from the destruction it saw in my eyes
for weeks and weeks I chased the monster, over hills, across rivers, through mighty
forests, and under the mountains

and when finally it could run no more it stood to fight, and then I saw the terror and
ferocity in its eyes

but death held no fear for me, and my will was unshaken, there at the end of the
world I killed your fear

the crowd was silent, in awe of the man, and there time seemed to stand still

then suddenly he wavered, and slid to the ground dead, his wounds had killed him

and the crowd looked on, motionless, for none could break the awful silence

and the same thoughts ran through their minds: higher walls, smaller windows, hide
from the danger

so sad, died in vain



An Ode to the Door Locks

Monica Block

Yes, those locks upon our doors
 Do keep without all trespassers,
 Unless the door be quite open.
 So we keep them closed sometimes,
 In hopes that those intruders be withheld.

But then there comes that chance
 We find ourselves – the very keeper of the door – objected,
 By that very lock we love, if it so happens to jam.

These times are precious and memorable,
 Occurring at occasions most opportune:
 Classes soon to commence, or the very like.

But then there are the times when the door does open,
 But the key likes its place!
 And so the door hangs open – for closed would look quite silly –
 With the key still transfixed within the lock.

These are times for great socializing,
 With whole groups of friends gathering to lend advice,
 On how to remove the key from its bearing.
 Pull harder! Pull sideways! Take the whole lock apart!

But whatever way this task is gone about,
 Though any zeal of tearing off plates and screws,
 Be sure to be the one who stays with hand upon the key,
 So when the key – with fiddling loosened – can be pulled out,
 It is by you, the hero.





Perfectly Impure Margarita Montoya

Hazy winters cover up the purity
Suns get washed away into obscurity

Smiles fade into the coldness

Barbaric men cross into the wilderness

Bonds broken, words unspoken, hearts crushed
Ties cut, desires hidden, feelings hushed

Eerie moon

Hear him

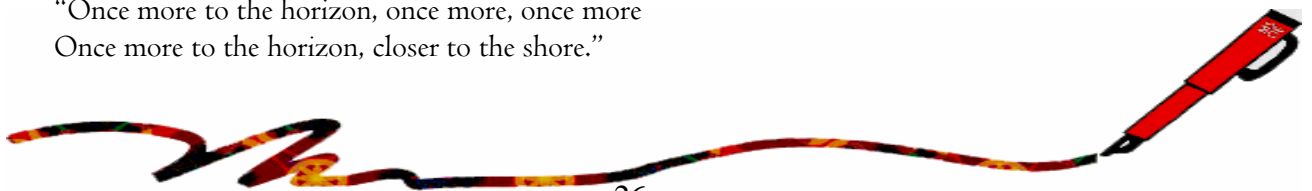
Yell

The Pilgrim's Progress Brother Meadowlark

Heavily traveled, this path of ice and snow
Paved smooth with flowers dead and rotting grass,
Made firm with frozen memories.
So cold the air that the wind has died,
And the clouds, long buried, are gone.

Here our traveler, stoic, strong
Marches, barefoot, to the crunch underneath.
His visage, scarlet, caked with frost
His eyes, blinded, his lids frozen shut.

Blackened and battered, ragged and worn
His footsteps, marked with crimson
Extend both behind and before.
Onward and onward and onward and on,
"Once more to the horizon, once more, once more
Once more to the horizon, closer to the shore."





Poems

Syed Lateef

Life is too short for hate,
But rather love is all you need,
For every breath you take.

Love is the one constant we all search for in our lives,
Our lives are different yet similar,
Love is the crossroad to our happiness.

The Earth spins, the wind blows, and the leaves rustle,
In every sound I hear the whisper of that name,
For that name I will spend my whole life searching.

In every heart beat, every blink, every breath I am yours,
Every time you are faithful my soul is yours.

Security Maria Soto

You miss home
You miss the security of a blanket at night
You miss not having to fight every day
For a cause that might not seem obvious
We miss your face
We miss your presence
We miss you walking in the door
Smiling and asking how our day went
We miss everything about you
Your soul and your spirit
But what we don't miss is the feeling of terror





Like the one when the Twin Towers were hit on 9-11
The terror has not gone away
But knowing you are there
Fighting, protecting... and some even dying for this country
Let's us all sleep just a little better at night
Still plagued with our worries of your safety and of your wellbeing
But that feeling, that lessening of the terror
Should help
Maybe a spiritual and emotional blanket
That will maybe help you sleep just a little better at night

To the soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan this is a poem from me to you. I hope that you know that, though I may not support the continuation of this war, I DO SUPPORT YOU!!!! I support the men and women that risk their lives to try and make the world a better place. To get evil dictators out of power, to try to keep nations at peace, and to just try to make the world a better place to live in. Please try to sleep better; though what you are going through is so hard, and it may seem so insurmountable, know that because you are there and because you are fighting, you have already fought a hard challenge. You are in my heart and in my prayers. Please try to come home safe; this world is a better place because of what you, brave men and women, do for us.

Ten Ways Jeremy Mitchell

I close my eyes;
Hoping for my dreams to come true.
Hoping my love will conquer you,
Forever until time dies.

Wind, twirl me around again,
Life was fun seeing things excitedly;
But, I don't get to see the sight, of ten;
Ten things that remind me of, the-sight-of-him.

There were ten,
Ten ways he would wake and say hi;
Ten ways he would hold and love me,
Ten ways we would fly through the sky
On feelings.





Out of peace;

I've fallen;

What was love?

If it never was forever,

And forever was only a dream, a child's dream.

Was it love?

From the first time we had touched

From the first time that we kissed,

Was it love the first time we said it was?

When, there were ten,

Ten ways I saw life differently,

Ten ways I lived time exceptionally.

Ten ways I felt beautifully.

But, this is now, that was then.

That was then,

When I lived a dream I dreamt,

When I could stay with him I slept,

In a peaceful night of romance.

That was then.

This is now,

Where I close my eyes, hoping;

Hoping for the day I can feel again,

Feel the same feelings, he had given.

Ten years older,

I've grown bolder.

But, I still miss the way he loved me;

I reminisce as I watch him hold her,

In ten ways he holds his new lover.

Wind...

Twirl me around again...

I used to be close so close to His garden...

How I used to feel love in the making..

I want to feel good again...

In, ten ways.





Bingo Garret B. Hampel

The bingo hall of the legion post was divided in two by the placement of the scoreboard. Smokers to the right and non-smokers to the left. Hopefully someone told the smoke to stay on the right side of the room.

Most of the faces were wrinkled and with hair of gray. Some walked and some were in wheelchairs. Most knew each other from their visits each Friday. There was talk that there was to be no bingo on New Year's Eve. But, someone piped up, "Where will we go?"

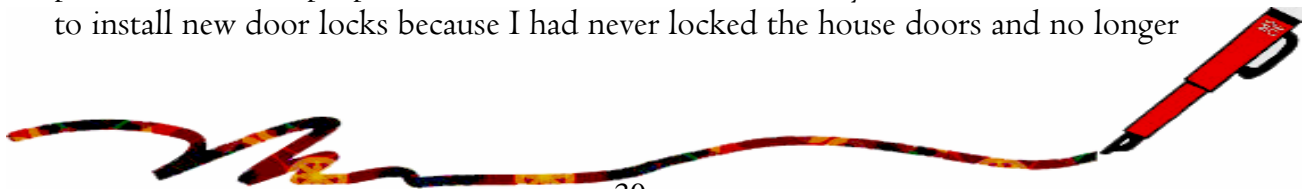
The dabblers were on the tables like sentinels all in a row. Some brought good luck pieces—trolls to be seen everywhere, with no roads to guard. It was all business here, for ears strained to hear the numbers that somehow got mumbled. "B7," "G49" were called out. The patterns on the score cards got filled.

It was 9:10 that evening and the games were all done. They packed up their bags and trolls and seat cushions to go. They waved to each other as they shuffled out the door.

Country Nights and City Lights Maggie Scheuerell

Last year the youngest of my four children graduated from high school and moved from our quiet, five bedroom home in the rural town of Erin to an apartment in the City of Milwaukee with her older brother. Not needing a 4,300 square foot home on four and a half acres of land all to myself, I decided to sell the home and purchase a two bedroom 1,600 square foot condominium in the city for roughly the same amount of money. My goal was to be closer to my children and nearer to MSOE, which I had entered as a freshman nursing student.

All my life I've lived in the country. I grew up on the outskirts of a small town as one of 11 children and later, raised four children of my own. Life was hectic, but at the same time laid back and secure. I always left the keys in the car and often left my purse, camera or laptop on the car's seat or floor. After 14 years in the house, I had to install new door locks because I had never locked the house doors and no longer

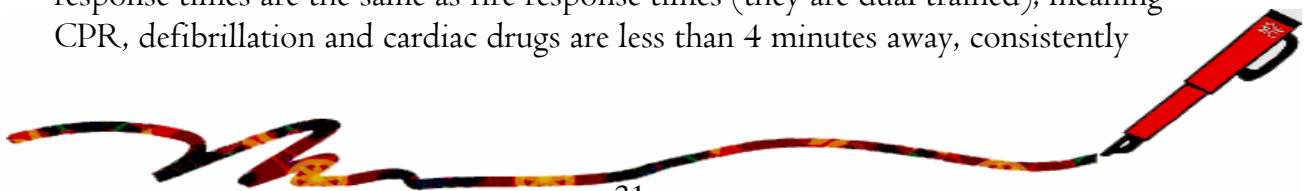


knew where the keys were when the home was to be listed. Not once, in all those years, were my home or vehicles violated by theft or vandalism. Conversely in the city, this year alone, my youngest daughter's car has been broken into twice, my son's vehicle was invaded by vandals who took all of his mechanical tools, and my oldest daughter's fiancé, also a Third Ward resident, had his car stolen just outside of his apartment.

I have learned from their experiences as well as from the constant lectures from a Milwaukee Firefighter friend, who on the other hand, dreams of moving from the city to the country when he retires. Now, I always lock my car, activate the alarm and hide all of my belongings in the trunk. My condo door is always locked and the alarm, which I didn't even own in my previous home, is always set.

While packing for the move, I took a break to show my firefighter friend through my quiet little environs in Erin. In passing my neighbor's home, I reflected on a story of how several years previous I had seen his home engulfed in flames. Twenty minutes after dialing 911, the local volunteer fire department finally arrived; there was nothing left but the foundation. He remarked that "you won't have to worry about that in the city. Average Fire Dept response time in Milwaukee is three minutes and 23 seconds. So, in case of fire, they can save more than just the basement of your home." Being a professional firefighter/paramedic myself in the City of Delafield, I was interested in the stark contrast to my rural locale, and we discussed it further. In addition to the rapid response time, Milwaukee Firefighters are fulltime professionals who, compared to the local volunteers, fight fires on a daily basis, so logically, they have far more experience. Not only can they arrive while you are still alive, they also have the ability and personnel to get the job done! How cool is that?

One can hardly contrast fire services without discussing Emergency Medical Services too. A small municipality out in the country cannot afford a fulltime BLS (Basic Life Support/EMT) ambulance service, let alone one with ALS (Advanced Life Support/paramedic) capability. Consider that irreversible brain damage starts four minutes after oxygenated blood stops and you can understand why a retired neighbor drove himself from Erin to Waukesha Memorial Hospital 30 minutes away, rather than wait 20 additional minutes for the basic level, private ambulance to arrive from another part of the county. Yes, he was having "the big one." In Milwaukee, EMS response times are the same as fire response times (they are dual trained), meaning CPR, defibrillation and cardiac drugs are less than 4 minutes away, consistently





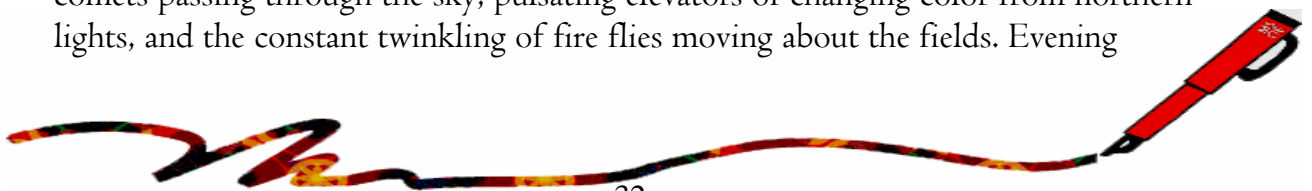
giving Milwaukee Fire/EMS one of the highest resuscitation rates in the country, a factor placing it among the top ranked EMS systems nationally year after year.

Everything is closer in the city and may even be within walking distance, so I save lots of money on gasoline living in the Third Ward. Gasoline usage for my car alone is down about 50 percent compared to what I used to spend living in the country. I spend close to \$150 less per month. My trip to school is 10 minutes from my city residence, compared to the 50 minutes I used to travel from the country. In the city, I can walk to the grocery store or pharmacy, whereas it took me 30 minutes by car before. Hospitals, doctors and medical facilities are all within ten minutes of my urban home, versus 30 minutes from my home in Erin.

I can walk to several good restaurants, three movie theaters, parks, the lakefront, and the homes of friends and family from the city locale.

There is entertainment in the city not found in the country: Professional sports such as baseball, basketball, hockey and soccer and college sports at several institutions of higher learning like Marquette, MSOE, and UWM. Also the Milwaukee Art Museum and Milwaukee Public Museum offer cultural history and an appreciation for world renowned exhibits. You can enjoy live entertainment facilities such as the Pabst Theater, Riverside Theater, Summerfest and Uhlein Hall at the PAC without an exhausting drive home.

The big thing about living in the city is, well it's bigger! The buildings are bigger, the streets are bigger, the sounds are bigger and the parties are bigger. Not just bigger, but more of everything, and at a faster pace! In the country, daytime sounds are the neighbor's donkey calling "hee haw," roosters crowing, gentle wind blowing through the trees, geese flying overhead, wild turkeys gobbling in the thicket. Night sounds are frogs croaking, crickets chirping, owls hooting, nocturnal animals rustling in the woods, and coyotes howling. The city sounds are the hustle and bustle of traffic, jet planes thundering overhead, cargo ships sounding their horns as they enter the harbor, and sirens wailing. The lights of the city include large brightly lit buildings illuminating the sky and blocking out the stars, colored traffic lights, flashing warning lights and reflections cast by silhouettes of distant ships on the dark waters of Lake Michigan. The country night skies are enormous with a deep black background filled with spectacular galaxies, vivid constellations the bright tails of comets passing through the sky, pulsating elevators of changing color from northern lights, and the constant twinkling of fire flies moving about the fields. Evening



routine would be relaxing in the warm bubbling spa under the stars with a cigar and a glass of port followed by a refreshing dip in the pond and a warm crackling pit fire on the deck overlooking the vast scene. I often enjoyed long walks down the dark and winding country roads, counting shooting stars and satellites with my unleashed dogs trotting beside me.

As one of the chapters in my life closes another opens. I am saddened by my loss, for it is all I've ever known. My comfort zone has been threatened, and I can only hope and pray that the city with all its distractions will fill the void and bring me as much happiness and satisfaction as my old world did. I cannot look back and be mournful, but rather I will open my arms to the city and embrace her for all that she is.

Crayons Garret B. Hampel

I was looking the other day for some mechanical pencils. There is a plastic container in the den that has all the leftover supplies and new supplies for school.

Every year we got new pens and pencils and boxes of crayons. But, where did the old ones go? To the box in the den.

I found a box of 8 large non-roll crayons, with my name scrolled across the top from some long forgotten teacher. I opened the box and all 8 crayons were there. I must have liked the color blue because that color was worn down the most. On the inside of the cover, in very primitive child handwriting, was my name—in the color blue. The name was not straight; it went on an angle and the letters were different sizes.

It all came rushing back to me. It was kindergarten back in 1991. It was my box. The smell invokes memories of that long forgotten time. The crayons of my childhood sit in a box to be used no more.

I closed the box and put it back in the plastic container. I know now where they are. The memories are warm and fuzzy. The memories make me feel safe. The world of crayons in the primary colors.



Elegy Jesse Winkler

2.

Flickering scenes. I know I am moving but all that my mind pictures are stills of the night. The silver grass rippling in the wind. The black pillars of trees topped with thousands of twisted arms. A faint path trampled among the gray leaves.

"Aren't you cold?"

I'm at a loss... I can't be cold, "I don't know what it is about me... I don't feel like other people do."

The slightest touch runs across me. "You ARE cold." These words in my head are meaningless, but I still respond.

"I don't live on the surface; my center is far below, untouchable by any force."

"Do even your wounds cause you no concern, then?"

"What wounds?" I look down and the starlight reflects my tormented armor. Surely, many of these strikes must have pierced my flesh, but I feel only the reassuring cold.

"You have my pity, and my fear. Your body has failed, but your spirit is fire... though not much help it will be to you now."

"We shall see about that." I lock my teeth together in a grim smile. Words, only words...

They are powerless to stop me.

The twilight land is hard and dark, the wind majestic and fierce as it rushes through me.

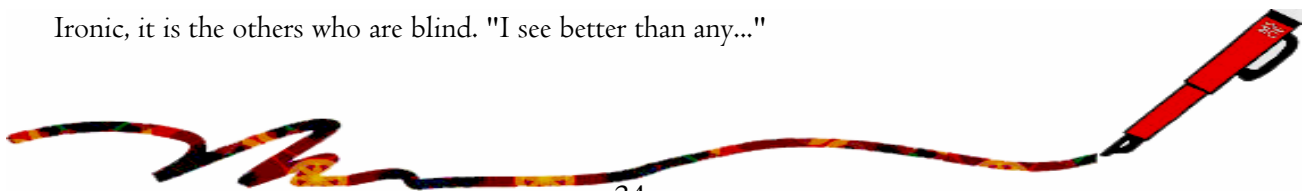
What am I doing out here? Some purpose eludes my empty mind.

"The end comes for us all, why torment yourself endlessly?"

"What torment?" I feel only the wind and the sharpness of my will, and I revel in it.

"You are surely blind, to not see your anguish."

Ironic, it is the others who are blind. "I see better than any..."





Suddenly, the land drops away and my view is filled with the starlight, an endless expanse with the faintest promises of light. I stare back unblinking, as solemnly, silently, and remorselessly it breaks me. The black land is rushing back into its place, and I am weightless, powerless to intervene as it pays no heed to horizon's containment, flying up to cover the stars in its irreverent embrace.

And the rushing wind is all that can carry my spirit now, and a shell all that is left behind.

I.

I jerk my body to catch my captain as he falls, and nearly lose my balance myself. He braces on me as he raises his head to meet my eyes. The tears that run down his face sparkle in the sunlight amid the dirt and blood. He coughs harshly.

"At least you will make it back," he says to me as he tries to smile. "You were the best of us, though I never understood how..." I try to hide my wounds from him even though his eyes no longer see me. Neither of us will be making it back. I wait crouched there under barren trees, the cold, wet ground delighted at the life it steals from us.

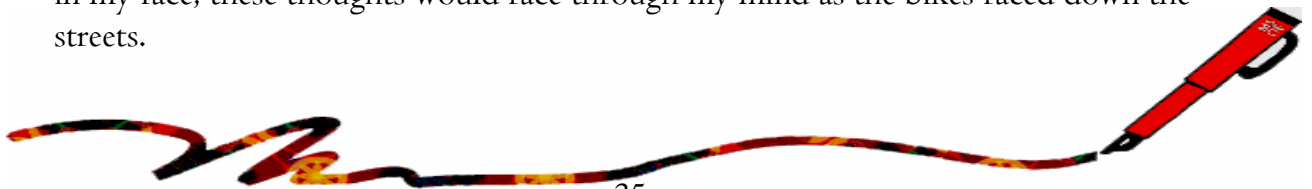
"Remember wh..." He starts, but lapses into coughing. His chin is stained in red as the blood runs out his mouth. He whispers something, but the creaking trees steal it away from me, loathe to allow a last request. I let him slide to the withered leaves, his body lifeless. I take the letter he secured next to his heart. Though torn and bloodstained, I have to believe it can still be read.

The letter is soaked and still warm with the dripping red, as though I have taken the very life out of the corpse of my friend. My shattered armor provides no security, and I numbly hold this artifact as I continue shakily on. I find my other hand to still be holding the cracked grip of some weapon, the rest forgotten. I drop it.

I turn back several times to the captain, though he is unmoving as one graven into the landscape. At last his form is out of sight and I only look forward. Alone. Keep moving.

First Bike Ride Roderick Wilson

I first learned to ride a bike when I was about 8 years old. I had already known how to ride with training wheels on, but to ride without them was the real challenge. In the summer I would see people riding their bikes and I would wonder why I couldn't ride like that. What could be so difficult about riding a bike? As I sat on my family's red picnic table with the bees buzzing and the cool summer breeze blowing in my face, these thoughts would race through my mind as the bikes raced down the streets.

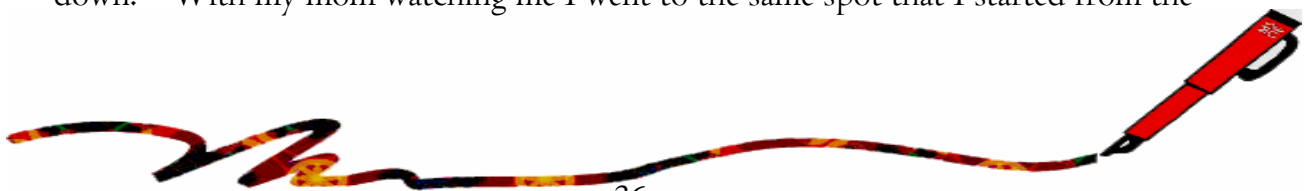


My neighborhood was a quiet and peaceful little place. The reason for it being so quiet was because a lot of old people lived in the area and whenever kids made too much noise they would tell them to keep it down. It was the kind of place where nothing and everything happened all at once. In the summer the trees and grass were filled with all manner of life. In the grass and trees one could find grasshoppers, ants, lady bugs and every other kind of insect known to man. For us kids it was like a miniature jungle. Eight year olds could be seen chasing rabbits and stepping on bees to feel them buzz under their feet. The latter event would be followed by a huge scream and then a "Mommy! Mommy! The bee stung my foot!"

My father and mother purchased my first bike at a thrift store, which I became very fond of. For me the store was like a treasure chest filled with every kind of toy and appliance that one could think of. The store had a familiar scent of laundry detergent which was pleasing to an 8 year old's sense of smell. The back of the store was always packed with old people because that's where the old people got their blenders and plates. In the middle was where I belonged, with the toys that had become accustomed to hearing "put it back" or "we'll get it next time" by some mother that felt it was a waste of money. At every corner of the store an 8 year old could find enjoyment in some item which was once thought to be useless or outdated by its previous owner.

My first bike was a used little black mountain bike with red markings on it that resembled scratches made by some wild animal. I wanted it because I knew it would get a lot of attention from the rest of the kids. The first day that I practiced riding my bike was a sunny summer day with the wind blowing in my face. My mother took me on top of the hill in our yard to help me learn how to keep my balance while I was riding down the hill. On my first try I fell when I rode to about 4 feet from my starting position. The fall wasn't that bad because I rode my bike on the grass so when I fell the grass cushioned my fall. 10 falls and 13 Band-Aids later I was ready to quit. I put my bike up and went to my room a defeated man.

The next day the sun woke me up at about 10 a.m. With some food in my stomach and a "can do" attitude, I went outside to face my challenge again. I was energized from my mom's homemade pancakes and fresh squeezed orange juice. I knew that today would be different; today I would become one of the kids that raced their bikes down the street everyday while the old people yelled at them to "keep it down." With my mom watching me I went to the same spot that I started from the



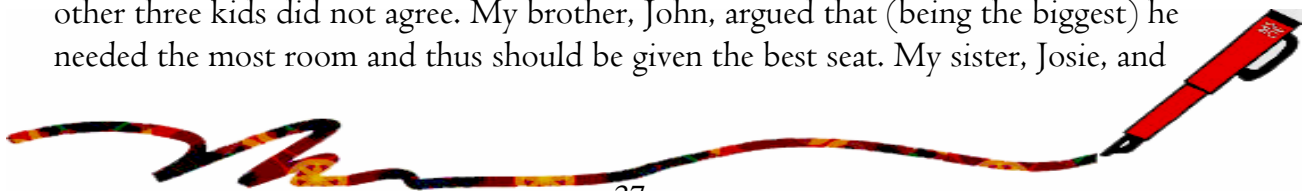
other day. This time the wind was blowing in back of me. When I got myself settled on the bike, I lifted my left foot onto the peddle and I pushed off with my right. I was doing fairly well up for about 10 feet. All of a sudden I lost my balance and fell face first in the freshly cut grass. I looked up at my mom and smiled; I knew that even though I had fallen, I still went further than I ever had. I decided to give it another shot, so I got up, brushed myself off, and took my bike to the top of the hill again. This time I pushed off with both feet at the same time and quickly put them on the peddles. As the bike took off I became friends with it; we had a lot of falls together but this time we both agreed that enough was enough. The bike and I made it all the way down the hill with little difficulty.

The next day I was a bike riding machine. I had graduated from riding the bike on the grass to riding it on the pavement. My mother kept a close eye on me with the first aid kit in her hands, just in case I got too full of myself and tried something I wasn't ready for. I wasn't on the same level as the kids that raced their bikes down the street everyday but I was still fairly good. I knew that in a week or two I would be joining them.

Learning to Fly: the Hard Way Jake Wiskamp

When I first heard about the “cousin road trip,” I was ecstatic; however, I soon realized there was nothing to be excited about. The plan was for my family, comprised of my mom, younger brother, and younger sister, to join my aunt, my cousin Madalyn, and my cousin Jimmy for a drive to grandma's house. Now, we lived in Colorado, and Grandma Betty lived in Illinois, so this was going to be a lengthy trip. The seven of us would be crammed into the miniscule Ford Windstar mini-van that my mom drove, for two straight days. I quickly realized that this fun little road trip would be a rigorous test of our wills and spirits.

The first fight began before we even started the car. The minivan seated seven adults comfortably, but it seemed to have trouble holding two adults and five kids. It was designed with two rows of two bucket seats and a third bench seat for three. My mom Janice and my aunt Barbara sat in front. Obviously the fight arose over who would sit in the middle bucket seats. I decided, being the oldest, that Madalyn and I should have “seniority” and have the comfort of the captain's chairs. However, the other three kids did not agree. My brother, John, argued that (being the biggest) he needed the most room and thus should be given the best seat. My sister, Josie, and

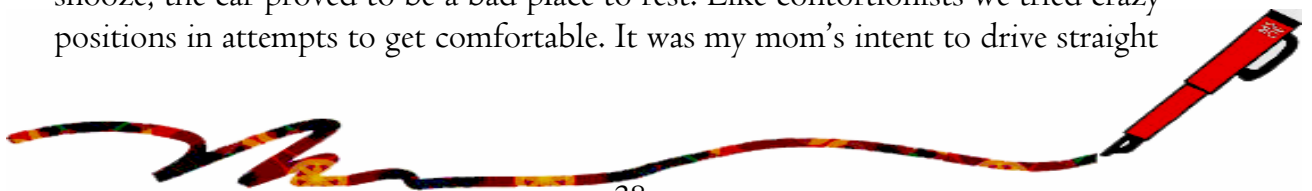


Jimmy did not have a valid reason, but compromised by throwing rambunctious tantrums to make their cases for the bucket seats, writhing around on the ground screaming insanely. Now it would not have been fair for anyone to get the best seats for the entire trip, so the parents decided on a rotation system. We flipped coins to see who received the middle row first, and then we were told that after every stop we would move one seat to our right. This solving our first scuffle over seating arrangements, we were finally able to get on the road.

It had not been more than an hour or two before we kids began to get antsy. The games of “Slug Bug” were beginning to wear thin on our arms, and our minds were strained from “The Alphabet Game.” Our favorite game, in which we made crazy, sometimes even profane hand gestures at other drivers, had already received the kibosh from the adults. It was at this point where we made the first of what would be many “emergency” stops made by our crew. Also at this point I began to see why my dad had decided to stay home alone.

Back on the long and lonely road after our not-so-quick pit-stop, we began to wrestle away hunger in fear of the squeeze cheese and crackers that would comprise our food budget for the entire trip. Finally the starvation was excruciating, and we had to eat. At first the squeeze cheese, which oozed from the aerosol can, was not as bad as imagined. However, as we continued to squeeze the cheese to make various numbers, letters and shapes, it became unbearably disgusting. It was my thought that this tasty snack would have hazardous effects on our health and wellness on this trip. It was not long before my hypothesis was proven correct. The slow gurgle of a car-load of upset stomachs soon arose, growing louder and louder until it was almost deafening. The squeeze cheese was wreaking havoc on our colons, and we would soon be engulfed by a raunchy stench. No one knows who let the gas pass first, but after that fateful fart, the flood-gates flew open and everyone began to let them fly. It became a race to roll down every window as fast as possible to clear the car of the awful air. However, the fresh air from outside had no lasting effect. The sickening stink had permeated into the cloth seat cushions and was beginning to engulf the interior of the minivan. A stop for Febreze had to be made to combat and kill the smelly demon.

With day one nearing its end, we had had more than enough excitement for the entire trip. One by one the passengers began to pass into slumber. It was light snooze; the car proved to be a bad place to rest. Like contortionists we tried crazy positions in attempts to get comfortable. It was my mom’s intent to drive straight

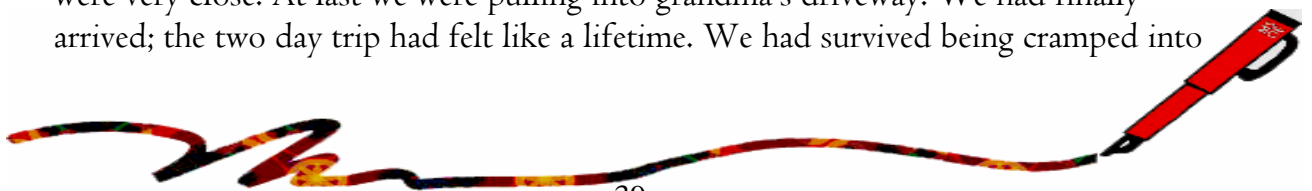


through, not wanting to pay for a hotel. After a while it dawned on her that no one was able to sleep well and that we would need rest to avoid crankiness and crabbiness the next day. Finally she decided it was time to stop at a hotel. We had arrived in the small town of Abilene, Kansas. The only hotel in town was “The President’s Inn,” and judging from the name, I figured it would befit our nation’s leader. We would soon see, however, that the name did not fit. At first glance the room looked amazing to our exhausted eyes, but, like a desert wanderer, the mirage quickly faded. The sheets were tattered and the wallpaper was peeling. The tile in the bathroom was cracked, and the water did not run. The fact that there was D-con scattered everywhere was a relief; at least there would not be a rodent problem. We set our alarm for the next day and chased the yet elusive sleep.

Day two began early, and it felt like I had not slept at all. Piling back into the car we were once again on our way. The promise of grandma’s comfortable beds and warm home cooking fueled us to drive fast. The effects of the long night before began to show. Fights began to erupt over every little thing. There were scuffles over radio stations, air conditioning vs. heater, who was in someone else’s space, even a fight over who got to eat the squeeze cheese first. Despite reaching a hotel, it proved to be too little too late and everyone’s nerves were on end. The quicker we got to grandma’s the better.

Regardless of the almost constant bickering, the second day of our journey was going by fairly quickly. Soon, however, traffic began to slow. The cars around us were no longer moving at speeding rates, but were crawling at a snail’s pace. The bright orange signs and the heavy machinery suggested that the traffic was due to construction. Soon the road transformed into a parking lot. There was no motion at all. Like a car graveyard, the traffic had reached a dead stop. We could only hope that the jam would break, but it soon became apparent that we would be sitting still for an extended period of time. Time seemed to move slower than the massive field of cars. The four lane highway we had been traveling on would be reduced to one lane a mile ahead. Countless merging cars tried to squeeze into the single lane. We were set back almost an hour and a half by the humongous construction project. With the traffic behind us, we finally set out on the path to grandma’s house. We were nearing the end of our journey.

After another hour or so of travel we started seeing familiar sights. We knew we were very close. At last we were pulling into grandma’s driveway. We had finally arrived; the two day trip had felt like a lifetime. We had survived being cramped into



the minivan, an awful smell, a broken-down motel, multiple skirmishes and a massive traffic jam. We made it without undergoing any serious hardships such as an accident, flat tire, or running out of gas. Grandma's house had never looked so good. However, even though we were there and safe, my family had learned one valuable lesson: driving was not the best mode of travel. We had learned to fly, the hard way.

Red House Garret B. Hampel

The red house of my childhood stood at the end of Madeline Lane in Northern Wisconsin. For as long as I can remember the place was known as the "Red House." Maybe it was to distinguish it from our own home in Milwaukee, and for a child, a color was the best way to tell things apart.

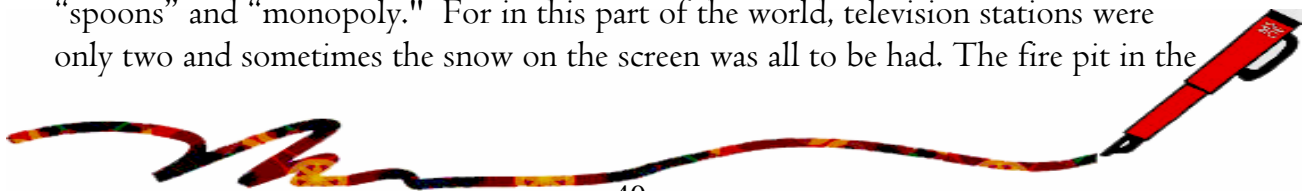
The house originally belonged to my great grandmother. It was in a small town, too small even to be incorporated. It used to be part of a logging boomtown. Now, it was a mecca for tourism and for times during the summer months part of Illinois. Most license plates came from this state and not Wisconsin.

The Red House sat at the edge of a forest. And, for the most part, the changes of time left it alone. It sat among birch and towering oak trees. It remained in a little part of the "old growth" of the woods.

I stood in the front yard, with a rake in my hands. Chasing the falling leaves and putting them into piles. Two flower gardens remain, with the struggling peony plants that my great grandmother tended to. The soil was too sandy to let the plants grow well.

The furniture of the house was great grandma's too. Most would be considered antiques. But, for us the thought was, if there was a fire, all would be lost and burnt to the ground. So why replace it with new things? My sister told me that she found a blue speckled pot and calendar, like the ones that we make spaghetti in. They were in an antique store and sold for thirty-five dollars each. Wouldn't great grandma be so surprised!

The Red House held so many memories. The times spent playing games of "spoons" and "monopoly." For in this part of the world, television stations were only two and sometimes the snow on the screen was all to be had. The fire pit in the





back held by blackened and cracked rocks and by the time and memories of stories and s'mores.

The house called me back every year. It beckoned of times to fish in the long hours of summer and to watch the glow of fireflies. The winters held the promise of snow, and of snowmobiling and skiing.

The house was passed down from my mother's side. My only wish is that the Red House remains the same. For I want to bring my children and great grandchildren here some day. But for now, I look at the house and see all the magic it can hold.

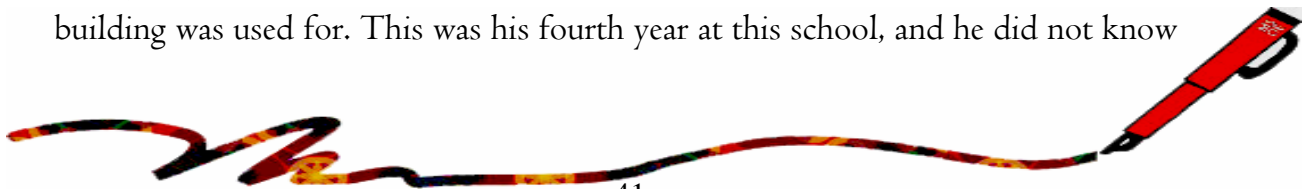
The Second Floor

Arun Matharoo

There stood Stan, gazing up at the outside of the rectangular-shaped BB (Beer Brewing) building. The bright sun directly above made it difficult to look up for more than a few seconds at a time. The building was about 100 feet across the front and back sides, 50 feet on the sides, and about 50 feet high. Stan observed that only the front side had any windows, which were tinted with very dark glass. The windows were only present on the second floor, and stretched across the entire part of the front side of the building. If one were to look at the building from a distance, it would almost look like a rectangular block with a dark black horizontal slit which made up the 5 feet high windows across the front side. A voice broke Stan out of his trance-like stare.

"Hurry up, you'll be late!" someone from Stan's next class said as he walked past.

Stan's next class was in this 3 story high BB building. All of the "Beer Design" classes were held in the basement of this building. There were offices, beer labs, and many other things which gave the basement of this building a "student-friendly" feel. The first floor was reserved for a small auditorium for presentations, some extra offices for some of the guidance counselors, and building technicians. The third floor was big, sort of a "playground," with foosball, pool, ping-pong, chess, cafeterias, a bookstore, and some offices, giving the third floor an overall relaxed feel. Then, there was the second floor. Stan did not know what the second floor of this building was used for. This was his fourth year at this school, and he did not know





what was on the second floor of this building. He had been pondering this for at least a week now, and his curiosity had grown stronger and stronger.

Stan made his way inside the building and noticed the elevator door open. The elevator was empty. He decided he would take the elevator, rather than the stairs, down from the first floor to the basement. He got in as the elevator door automatically closed behind him. He looked at the available buttons that would take him to the different floors. They were "B," "1," "2," "3," a button for an emergency, a button to open the doors, one to close the elevator, a keyhole for the fire department, and another keyhole which was unmarked. He hovered his finger over the "B" and hesitated. He looked up at the markings on the top that showed which floor the elevator was on. Similarly, there was a "B," and a lit up "1," "2," and "3." Stan never really noticed these things much until recently. He moved his hand up to the "2" button, and waited. He didn't know what he was waiting for; he wanted to press it and find out what was there and end the nagging thought of not knowing.

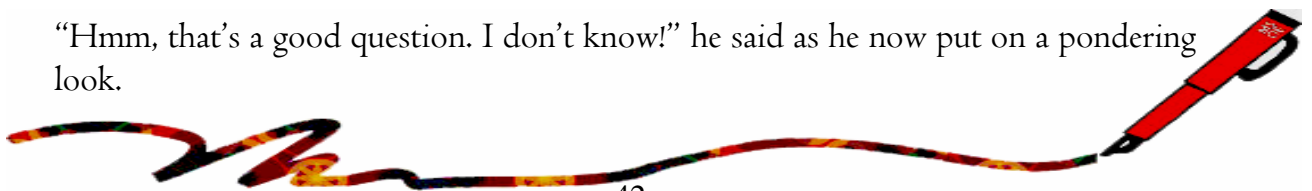
He kept this position for a few seconds and got ready to press the "2," when suddenly, the elevator began to move. Indeed someone in the basement was calling the elevator down, and it was too late to press the button to go up. A few seconds later, the elevator door opened, and Stan got off, as two kids got on to go up. Stan looked up at the marking to show where the elevator was. In about 2 second intervals, it went from a lit "B," to a lit "1," to a lit "2," to a lit "3," and came to a stop. Stan temporarily gave up the thought as he walked through the halls to his class.

He took the only empty seat left, in the back. The teacher had already begun his lecture on different brewing techniques, and the use of hops. Stan was not able to concentrate on the lecture; his mind kept wandering to what was on the second floor. A few minutes later, realizing that trying to concentrate on the lecture was a lost cause, Stan turned to his left, and whispered to the guy sitting on the seat next to him.

"What is on the second floor of this building?" Stan whispered.

The guy thought about it for a moment and then replied.

"Hmm, that's a good question. I don't know!" he said as he now put on a pondering look.





Stan turned to his right, and whispered to the guy on the right.

“What is on the second floor of this building?”

The guy smiled and whispered back.

“No one seems to know. I asked a bunch of people, and none of them knew. I tried looking it up, but no information was provided. I asked professors, and counselors, but none of them seemed to know either! My theory is they have a top secret lab there where they use illegal substances to make super beer or something!”

Stan just stared at him silently.

“Ok, I don’t know, ok! No one else seems to know either.” the guy continued.

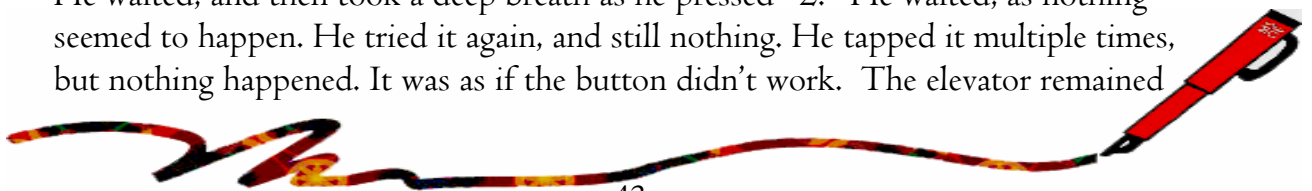
“Have you tried going there to find out for yourself?” Stan asked.

The guy thought for a second and replied.

“Honestly, no. The thought of doing something like that never occurred to me. Maybe I just didn’t have any time to do that, or maybe deep down I am scared to find out. . . . or maybe I am just too drunk to remember anything. . . . yeah I think that’s it!” he said as he pulled a beer out of his pocket, and gulped it all down in 10 seconds.

Stan nodded his head to acknowledge the end of the conversation. He thought about it for a moment. How can no one know what is on the second floor? Not even the faculty and staff know what is there, so who knows then? Who uses the second floor? Apparently none of the students or professors or the building staff; then who would know what is there?

Stan was thinking about this too much, and almost had a panic attack. Just not knowing almost scared him. He tried to not think about it, and remained seated. This went on for about 2 minutes until he just couldn’t take it anymore. He got up, left the room in the middle of the lecture, and walked down the empty halls to the elevator. It was already on the basement floor. He got in, and looked at the buttons. He waited, and then took a deep breath as he pressed "2." He waited, as nothing seemed to happen. He tried it again, and still nothing. He tapped it multiple times, but nothing happened. It was as if the button didn’t work. The elevator remained



where it was. He pressed the “door open” button, and got out. His curiosity got even stronger as his walking speed got faster as he neared the stairs. He went up two floors, and reached the door that led to the second floor. He looked at the door. “2nd Floor,” a small green sign read. Stan got ready to open the door. He was almost scared to find out what was on the other side. He didn’t want to waste any more time. He grabbed the knob, and tried to turn it. It wouldn’t turn. He tried the other direction, and it still wouldn’t turn. He pulled, it wouldn’t open. He pushed. Nothing! He backed off, and looked at the knob. There was no keyhole or button, or anything that could be used to unlock/lock it from this side. He tried once more, with all his might to get it opened, but to no avail. He spent another 2 minutes trying everything he could think of to try to open the door. There seemed to be no way to open it. Stan finally concluded that the door was locked. He was now exhausted from all of his efforts. He thought for a second, and then knocked on the door. Nothing! He banged on it with both hands. Still nothing! He repeatedly pounded with all the power in his hands. Nothing. Now he was out of breath, and his hands were hurting. He couldn’t believe it. The door wouldn’t open.

Feeling defeated, and still frustrated from not knowing what was behind the door, he turned around to go back downstairs as he noticed someone slowly walking up the stairs toward him. It looked to be a man in his 50’s, a custodial worker dressed in a blue uniform. Stan didn’t care anymore for formalities, and got straight to the point.

“What is on the second floor!?” he asked, almost yelling.

The man came to a stop next to Stan. He looked at Stan, then at the door, then back at Stan.

“Oh...” he replied.

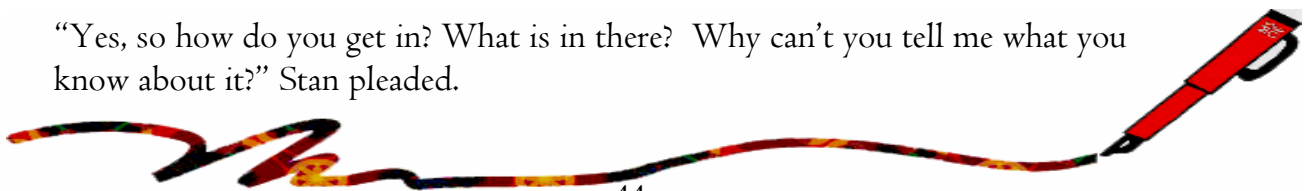
“The door is locked; what is in there?” Stan asked again.

“.....Nothing,” was the reply.

“What do you mean nothing? How do you even get in?”

“The door is locked.”

“Yes, so how do you get in? What is in there? Why can’t you tell me what you know about it?” Stan pleaded.



"I told you, nothing. There's nothing of interest for you at least."

Stan was now getting even more frustrated.

"Can you at least tell me who uses the second floor, if nothing else?"

The man hesitated.

"No one. . . . No one uses the second floor, there is nothing there, don't worry about it," the man replied nervously.

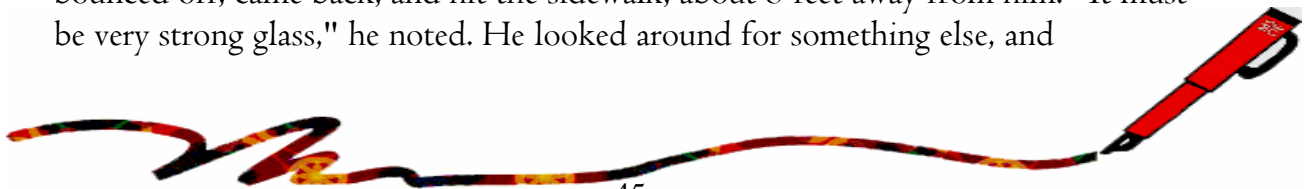
With that, the man continued walking up the stairs toward the third floor, leaving Stan almost ready to explode with frustration. After about 5 minutes of pacing back and forth in the little space that was in front of this door, Stan was able to calm himself down. He turned to face the stairs leading down, and stopped. He quickly turned around, and gave the door one more try, but it still wouldn't open. He finally decided the door wasn't going to open and went back to his class in the basement.

The rest of Stan's day consisted of getting drunk in order to not totally lose his mind, and plotting. He was plotting how he was going to get past the door. He would go at around midnight. He knew the building would be closed by then, and it would be completely empty. He would break in and break down the door. He would use the power of a screwdriver along with a hammer to take out the bolts and screws that connect the hinges of the door to the wall.

It was midnight, and Stan was all set. He stood in front of the building, and looked up at the windows. Immediately he felt a rush of energy.

"Damn you, second floor!!! DAMN YOU!!!" he yelled out.

Stan looked around, making sure no one was there. He noticed a small rock on the sidewalk. He couldn't resist it, especially under the influence. . . .of alcohol. He grabbed it, aimed it toward one of the many second floor windows of the building, and threw it. He backed off from under the window, as he expected the shattered glass to fall onto the sidewalk below. To his surprise, the rock hit the window, bounced off, came back, and hit the sidewalk, about 3 feet away from him. "It must be very strong glass," he noted. He looked around for something else, and



remembered something. He pulled out a full can of beer from his pocket. He aimed for the window, and threw with all his strength. It bounced off the window, and came back to Stan who caught it. "The window must be made out of some sort of unbreakable glass," Stan concluded.

He shook his head, drank the beer, and continued on as planned. He would go in through the window in the back which he knew was never locked properly. He would need to play around with it to get it opened. Five minutes later, he was inside the building. It was all dark; he pulled out his flashlight, and made his way through the inside of the building toward the only staircase that was near the front. After many twists and turns through dark and silent hallways, he reached the stairs. He climbed up and finally arrived at the door. He looked at it for a second, and then gave it another try. It was still locked. He looked around, walked up a couple steps toward the third floor, and placed the flashlight on the 3rd step, facing the door, giving him plenty of light to work with.

He got to work on the hinges. There were 3. He started on the top one, using the tip of the screwdriver as a wedge in the hinges, and the hammer to hit the bottom of the screwdriver to loosen the hinge from the door. After this was done, he began unscrewing the metal part off the side wall. After 5 minutes, he finally was able to get one of the three off. He took a breath and got ready for the one in the middle next, when he heard someone's voice from behind him.

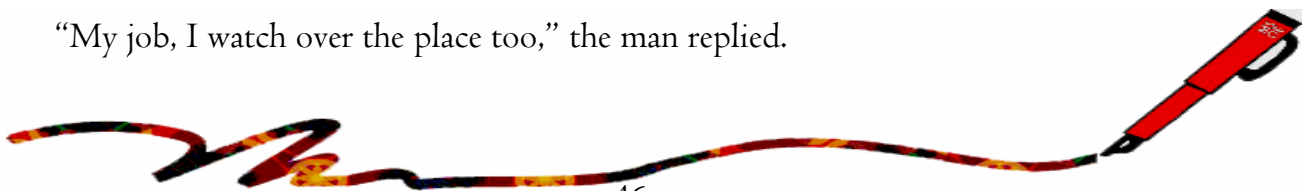
"You are just wasting your time," said a voice.

Stan turned around, and noted from the dim light from the flashlight that reached the area behind it, a few steps above, where the sound had come from. There was a figure sitting on the top step behind the flashlight. It looked like a man. He stood up, and walked down, past the flashlight, down the steps, and came to a stop next to Stan. It was the custodial worker Stan had seen earlier that day. The man looked at the flashlight, gave a soft chuckle, and looked back at Stan.

"I told you, there is nothing on the second floor," said the man.

"What are you doing here at this time of night?"

"My job, I watch over the place too," the man replied.





“You work 24 hours a day or something?”

The man laughed.

“You are a curious one!”

The man looked at the door, and observed Stan’s progress.

“Tell you what...go on!” he said, looking at Stan.

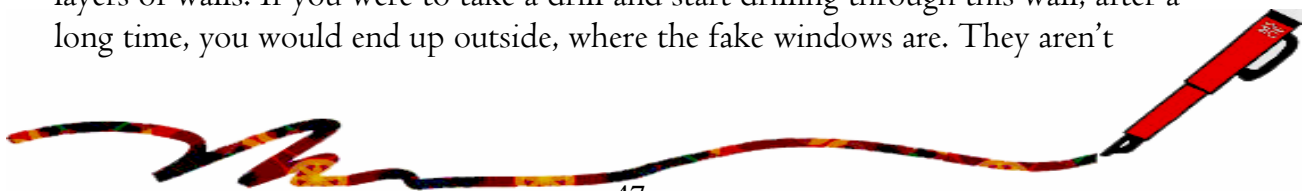
Stan hesitated for a moment, shrugged, and continued his work on the middle hinge. The man walked over to the steps, and took a seat next to the flashlight. Stan worked non-stop for the next 10 minutes on the remaining hinges. Finally, he was able to get them all off the door. Stan stood up, exhausted. Placing the screwdriver and hammer on the ground, he looked at the door. The man stood up as well, and looked at the fine job Stan was able to do in such a short time. The door hung there loosely, and could be pulled out with a little effort. Stan looked over at the man, who had a smirk on his face, looking at the door. Stan took a couple steps closer to the door, and got ready to do what he had worked so hard to do. With one final deep breath, he grabbed the door on the sides, pulled it out, and couldn’t believe what he saw on the other side. It was a wall. A brick wall, behind this door. It was as if there had been a rectangular area carved out in the brick wall the door was on, for the door to fit in. Stan stood there for a few seconds, trying to grasp the idea that what he saw was the true reality. He wasn’t sure what he was expecting to find when he removed it, but he certainly didn’t expect this.

He put the door on the side wall, and looked at the man who still had that smirk on his face.

“What did I tell you? There’s nothing behind the door,” he said, chuckling.

“But...but...” replied Stan. He couldn’t come up with words to vocalize what was going on in his head at the time. The man nodded and continued.

“The truth is, when this building was first built, there was no design that included the second floor. It is mainly a 9-10 feet high piece of block with cemented bricks as layers of walls. If you were to take a drill and start drilling through this wall, after a long time, you would end up outside, where the fake windows are. They aren’t





windows by the way, just some sort of material composed of metal and lead that was sort of plastered onto the outsides of the wall to make it appear like windows. Those windows exist only for the second floor because that way, we can make up different stories about the 2nd Floor to tell to those curious ones. We can say it's a meeting room, or that it's a floor for custodians to take their break, or office space reserved for certain occasions, etc. Mainly, however, it is there because, sub-consciously, the human brain would be less likely to be curious about it or wonder what is there if the windows appeared to be only for the second floor. It is complicated, it sounds counter-intuitive, but research had been done and it showed that putting the fake windows on the outside was the best route to take."

Stan continued listening, still in shock.

"There is nothing but the block of bricks all around where the second floor should be. This building doesn't have a second floor. The second floor is basically a brick foundation used to strengthen the base of the third floor. That is why the third floor is about 40% of the building, it takes up a large portion of the building, and the only way the people who designed the building could make it happen was to use the second floor as they did."

Stan took it all in, and sighed in disbelief. After a few moments, he finally spoke.

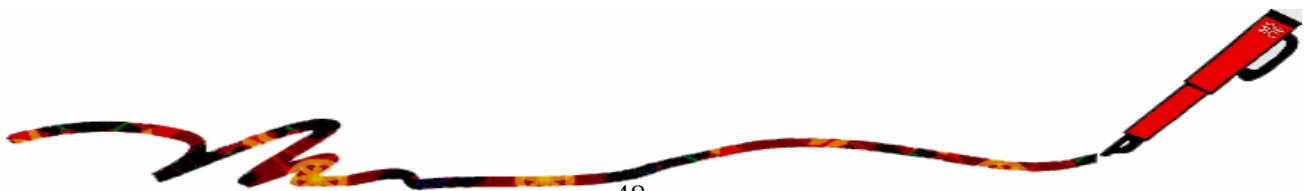
"But, why not just say there are 2 floors?" Stan asked.

"It would have violated one of the city regulations for a building with these proportions. I don't know the exact details on that, but it had to appear to all that there were 3 floors, in order to conform to these regulations. One of my jobs along with the other "custodians" is simply to make sure that this doesn't get out. There have been others before you that had this similar curiosity."

Stan continued to listen.

"None of them, however, had a curiosity as strong as yours. That is why I stayed here tonight. I had a feeling you would do something like this."

"But...now I know about it, so now what?"





“I just have to trust you, I’m sure you won’t mention this to anyone. Plus, if you did, people with less curious minds, which include most people, would think you are just...crazy!” he replied.

“I see...” Stan said, as he looked back at the wall.

“How do I know there isn’t a secret room or something behind this wall?” Stan asked.

The man laughed.

“Well you just have to take my word for it. I mean... how do you know you have a stomach, or lungs, or a liver inside your body? That is a “fact” that you believe. Similarly, this is something that you must believe, because it is a fact. The only way you would know for sure would be to drill your way through the entire second floor and find out for yourself,” the man replied.

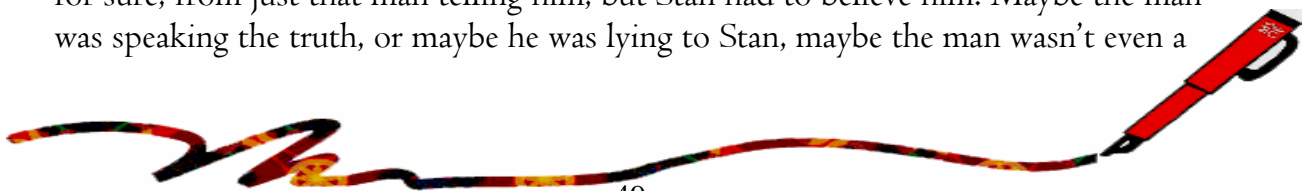
Stan didn’t have a reply to that. He nodded his head as he understood what the man was saying. The man smiled and nodded his head.

“I left the backdoor open for you, have a good night.”

Stan nodded his head, picked up his supplies and walked off. Using his own supplies and light, the man began putting the door back together.

As Stan walked toward the back exit, he thought to himself about what the man had said. Indeed, there was no way he could know for sure that what the man said about the second floor was true, just like he didn’t know if there really were a liver or stomach inside of him like there supposedly were in the bodies of billions of others. Stan was not alive 100 years ago. He had to believe what is written in the history books about what happened back then. It was easy for him to believe that there were people around 100 years ago, from what he knew, and these people surely were the ones verifying what really happened at that time.

Here was one man telling him there was nothing on the second floor, and Stan had to believe it because that was what the fact was. There really was no way of knowing for sure, from just that man telling him, but Stan had to believe him. Maybe the man was speaking the truth, or maybe he was lying to Stan, maybe the man wasn’t even a



custodian, just someone dressed like one and trying to hide something. Maybe there was no man there, and he had just imagined it, maybe the man lived inside the building or something. Maybe that man was insane, and made that story up. Stan understood the point. He understood that he was going on what the man told him.

As long as he realized this, realized that his views of facts are based on what he is told by someone, that was enough, just him knowing that. He felt good and relieved from this frustration for the first time in what seemed like years. Stan smiled as he climbed out the window he had come through, and went back to where he lived, when a thought came to him. This building did not have a backdoor.

Thunder

Garret B. Hampel

You could hear the sound off in the distance. The children playing games next door were drowned out by the sound. It was coming closer. It was coming down the highway.

The sounds of the motorcycles on the highway. The sounds of thunder. The last vestiges of summer. It was the last weekend to enjoy the bikes. Some went with the wind in their hair. Some were the wild ones. Some had the jackets of years gone past. Patches faded from the sun and skid marks on the sleeves. Some walked with limps from mishaps on the road.

The road is calling. The road is singing its song. The sirens of the road are calling to me.

The wheels go round.
The wheels go round.
The flash off the chrome.
The sound of thunder in my ears.
The wheels go round.

It is time to mount up. It is time to hit the road---for a little while. It is time to get lost in the pleasure of the moment. The sounds of thunder are calling me.

The wheels go round.
The wheels go round.

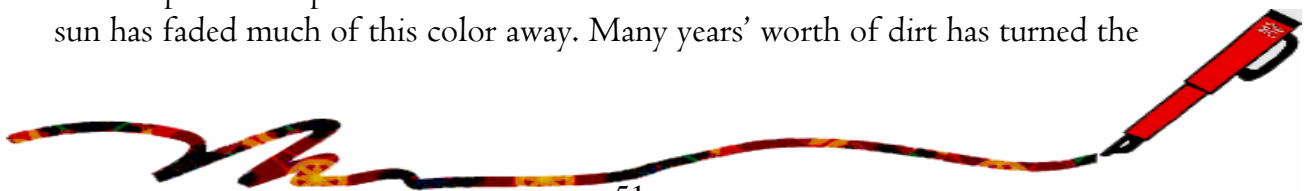


Usefully Old Jake Wiskamp

As most things age, they begin to break down or become outdated; sooner or later they become absolutely worthless. One can witness this fact by opening random closets in my house. In one certain closet you will find three printers, one that does not print color so it has no use, another that fails to feed paper, and another still that does not scan. Opening another such closet, you can see a mountain of pre-cordless, pre-touch tone phones that are simply collecting dust. However, not all things become useless with age. A small amount of old objects still have some use. My 1979 Ford Bronco and my Uncle Clint are examples of this phenomenon. If one were to look at my car or my uncle and judge from inner and outer appearance, they would be most certainly considered worthless. However, get to know the car or the man and you will see their worth shine through their appearances. It is just like the old saying: you can't judge a book by its cover.

Looking at my Bronco it is very hard to see the value it possesses. The exterior of the car has seen better days in its 26 year existence. A close inspection of the paint reveals orange surface rust, but this is just the beginning. Most autos come in two-tone or solid color paint jobs; mine is four-tone. The original colors were a cherry red with white; it was later repainted an orange-red with black. The second paint job was shabby, and it has peeled off in various, random areas on the body to reveal the original paint, hence the four-tones. The car actually was in good condition until an inexperienced driver, me, got a hold of it. I have been the unfortunate victim of not one, not two, but three accidents. To say the least the body of the car is a bit damaged. The rear tailgate does not fold down; this is a result of failing to see a parked Honda behind me. The front bumper is contorted and twisted from where I slammed into another vehicle. The driver's side fender is no longer sleek and smooth. The motorcycle which I pulled out in front of transformed the left side into a cavernous dent. If you were to judge the value of the car by the body, it would appear to be worthless.

The interior of the car is not surprisingly just as beat-up as the exterior. The color of the carpet is best described as "unique," or maybe "original." To tell the truth, it actually looks worse than a first-grader's mosaic painting, too many colors and no defined pattern. I speculate that the color at one time was some shade of red. The sun has faded much of this color away. Many years' worth of dirt has turned the

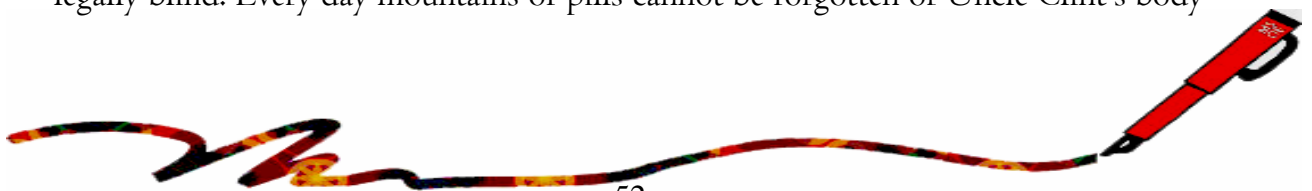


carpet in front of the seats a peculiar puke-like orange-gray that cannot be found anywhere else in this world. Riding in the Bronco is very uncomfortable in the summer. The air conditioning has not worked for who knows how long, and the passenger side window does not roll down. Also this vehicle can provide a very dreary, mind-numbing ride, unless perhaps you are one of the handful of people that actually still use cassette tapes. I have been meaning to get a CD player, but have not yet gotten around to it. Again, judging from a ride in the car, the value of the Bronco appears to be insignificant.

Regardless of the appearance of the interior and exterior of my car, I could not do without it. It is the best car ever, not only to me, but to many people who see past its various shortcomings. The Bronco has never failed to start, or failed to get me where I was headed. It is trustworthy and dependable. The engine is in great condition, probably the only thing that has been taken care of. The huge, 36" all-terrain tires make this an amazing 4-wheeler. I have never met a curb, rock, or mound of snow that my truck could not climb. Countless students stuck in snow-banks have arrived to school on time through swirling blizzards because of the towing power of the Bronco. The engine has been taken care of and will not let you down. The value of my car cannot be seen by its looks. Its value lies in its dependability and its helpfulness. Anyone that has relied on the Bronco for transport will vouch for its worth and usefulness.

A lot like the Bronco, my Uncle Clint does not look very good on the outside. Eighty-seven years of life has certainly taken a toll on the body. Multiple scars can be viewed from every angle from a variety of assorted wounds. Half of his tongue is gone as a result of cancer. A chunk of finger was lost during his service to his country. Hair is simply a memory for Clint. His pot-belly extends from his mid-section, a result of The Sheboygan Diet: beer, brats, and cheese. He hobbles and limps around, barely able to walk. If you just saw him without knowing him, you might think he was good for nothing.

Uncle Clint's bodily problems do not stop at the surface. Many diseases have ravaged his health, leaving his body beaten and broken. When you begin smoking at a young age like my uncle, lung and tongue cancer sometimes cannot be avoided. The strength of his bones is not very good. He has needed many surgeries to get replacement hips and knees. His eyesight is not what it used to be either. He is legally blind. Every day mountains of pills cannot be forgotten or Uncle Clint's body





might stop functioning altogether. Judging from his health, some might say he is not only old, but also useless.

In spite of all of this, I consider my uncle to be a very valuable and worthwhile man; anyone who got to know him would think the same. He has experienced almost everything in his long lifetime, so his advice is always applicable to any situation you are struggling with. His brain, like the engine in my Bronco, runs perfectly. He is dependable and caring. He knows most everything there is to know. If you have a question about any subject, ask Uncle Clint. He will undoubtedly know the answer. He can tell the greatest stories ranging from when he was in the service, to when he traveled all around the world.

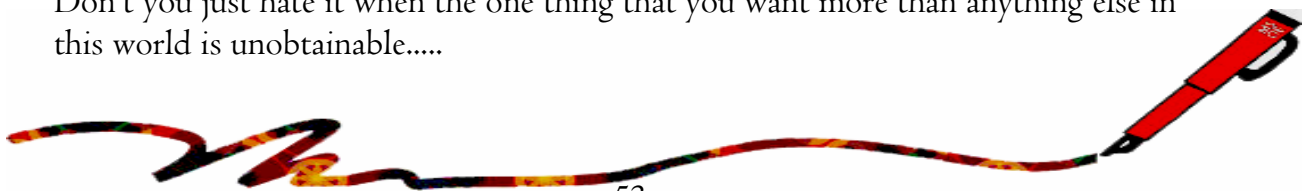
Uncle Clint is always there when you need someone to talk to; he will never let you down. Uncle Clint's value cannot be seen by looking at his physical condition, on the outside or the inside. He is very dependable, and his worth can be seen in his advice, his knowledge, and his amazing stories. He may appear old, but his mind is youthful and capable, and in this lies his usefulness.

Despite being on in years, both my 1979 Ford Bronco and my Uncle Clint have unrecognizable worth. The saying holds true; a book cannot be judged by its cover. The value of my truck and my uncle is held where it matters most. The outward appearance and the condition of the interior distract one from seeing the engine and the brain which work perfectly. Unlike many things that lose value as they become worn out from use and abuse over the ages, my truck and my uncle have as much value, if not more, than they did in the days that they were made. I would not trade in my truck or my uncle for shiny new models. They are great just the way they are. Even though they both would be considered elderly, they are dependable and helpful. They are both usefully old.

Work [in progress] David Mattox

Don't you just hate it when you put it all on the line for someone/something and it's not good enough....

Don't you just hate it when the one thing that you want more than anything else in this world is unobtainable.....





Don't you just hate it when you know that you gave it your best shot, yet you are restless at night because you feel as though your efforts weren't good enough...

Don't you just hate it when the cards are stacked against you and you prevail against them, but when it's all said and done, the cause, the reason for your fighting no longer exists.....

And yet we keep going on...day after day looking for new causes to fight on, to survive. For what else can we do but continue on so that we may be able to die another day while praying with all our hearts that we will find what we are looking for in the next day that life has granted us. And when you finally find what it is you are looking for, you are invincible. Nothing on Heaven or Earth can take away this feeling from you, ever.





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About Ink Waves

Ink Waves is published by MSOE's General Studies Department. Designed to showcase students' literary talent and to encourage writing potential, Ink Waves attests to this department's belief that science and the arts can and do coexist. Students, faculty, and staff may submit writing of all kinds: fiction and nonfiction, poetry and prose, leisurely writings, and classroom assignments. Ink Waves is published every spring quarter. We accept submissions and inquiries at any time.

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Work should be submitted as an attachment in MS Word to stahnke@msoe.edu.

In an email accompanying the submission, include your name, major, and year as they should appear with the submission if accepted. Faculty and staff should include the department in which they work and their title (assistant professor, executive assistant, etc.).

When submitting work, provide a release statement that indicates your request for publication and the year/edition in which you would like your submission to appear: "I would like the following submission(s) to be considered for publication in Ink Waves 20--."

Students may submit more than one work of prose, poetry, and/or fiction.

Maximum length of each submission: 1000 words.

All submissions received by Friday of Week One, Spring Quarter, will be considered for publication in that year's edition.

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