

◇ Defenestration ◇

Volume II, Issue VI

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**Chicken
by
Cat Knight**

I.

Chicken chocolate socket sprocket
chicken walks into a bar
hopes to drown in sorrow
with whiskey and beer
just enough to feel queer
he hopes there are condoms to borrow
hot chicken sex

II.

truckin cluckin rampage!
chicken is in bed
visage not so sage
next to him
selena squirrel
a fuzziacious wrath of rage
selenas backhand
beaten by hot girl
next time lets stick to

(reader choice!)

- a. twirls
- b. churls
- c. swirls
- d. shawn

Pregnancy in the Freudian Age
by
Ella McCrystle

Nursing ginger ale and saltines, I swoon
when the doctor makes his house call.
"Doctor, I feel dizzy, faint, nauseous.
I must be pregnant."

He looks at the austere bedroom
and immediately calls a colleague;
they whisper in hushed tones of
"hysteria" and "old maids."

Before long, a group of young bearded
doctors with spectacles appear. I adjust
the ribbon in my hair and fluff myself
on the pillows just so.

As I eyeball the young ones, their mentor
asks about my childhood, bed-wetting,
fantasies concerning my father and probes
for hatred toward my mother.

"No," I answer, "I've none of those problems."
Winking at the blond student in front, I move
my hand toward his, hanging so close
to the edge of my sheet.

"But there has been that bike-messenger Gabriel
with his lovely glow, showing up nightly
delivering scrolls in some strange language
--speaking of virgins and the like."

Ode to Catherine Zeta Jones
by
Roddy Williams

Oh lovely Catherine Zeta Jones
We love your Catherine Zeta bones
Your Zeta legs, your Zeta eyes
Your Zeta meteoric rise

To stardom since you did, let's say
"The Darling Zeta Buds of May"
Skipping through the hollyhocks
In skimpy Catherine Zeta frocks.

Your husband's buds are in decline,
His stalk held up with splints and twine.
But you love his creaky Zeta bones.
God bless you, Catherine Zeta Jones

Flying To The Sun by **Alex Keegan**

Dear traveler, since you have decided you are going to the sun, please read the following guide. Also it is important that you ensure you take all items as specified in inventory 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 20a. The carrying of High-Factor* UV-Block is mandatory.

You will need:

- (a) Knife, Fork, Spoon (metal)
- (b) Knife, Fork, Spoon (plastic)

Items B1 B2 B3 will be used on the journey out

(there is a postal stop on the moon for which you will need envelopes, sticky labels and six twenty pence stamps per letter; a second stop is made in Venusian orbit but here postage will be £29:99 or three letters for £74:99. Occasionally refrigerated mail may be sent from Mercury at a cost of £256,087 per ounce, but this cannot be guaranteed)

but from Mercury onwards, the plastic cutlery will be inoperative, whereupon items A1, A2, A3 will replace them. (See "oven gloves" items 19:8:C1 and C2).

Our brochure, which we are sure you have studied, details the eleven stages of sun-travel. These are Investigation, Preparation, Expectation (our little joke as your ship takes off from Spitzbergen), Euphoria, Negative Reaction, Boredom, Ennui, The Suicidal Fifty Million Miles, then Acceleration. There is one more stage.

Investigation, we need not deal with. You have acquired the necessary funds and booked your place on Sun Flight 13. Now begins preparation. (This is why you are reading these instructions.)

"Expectation" (the beginning of the physical journey from the Spitzbergen Sun Exploration Centre) is set for February 9. The launch of the ship will not be delayed by weather, only by earthquake or catastrophic mechanical breakdown.

Euphoric reaction to escape from Earth is normal. The sheer power of SunShip 13 and the spectacular light displays seen when breaking through the various earthbelts (the oxygen-nitrogen limits (5,000 feet), the aerosol circle, the flatulence zone, the historically named but inaccurate so-called "ozone-layer", stratosphere, ionosphere, and so on are truly stunning, and if anyone ever returns from a SunShip expedition (rather than the ejected cameras) we expect them to have written stellar poetry.

Negative Reaction after Earth-escape is a common but not automatically experienced syndrome. Letters from Venus (£29:99 or three letters for £74:99) have detailed the sudden reverse in outlook by travelers. It is believed this may be due to an excess of serotonin in the bloodflow of the brain due to hyper-stimulation from the light and colour display of the Earth-escape phase, though some letters have suggested that the view of Earth looking like a rotten apple giving of odorous fumes which drift in the solar wind may be a contributing factor.

Escape from Earth takes power, and the early slingshot trip to and round the moon is the beginning of the phase known as boring. Subsequent phases are fucking boring, Jesus this is fucking boring and phase three, this is so fucking boring I'm going to have to kill the next person to blink.

After the moon, sling-shot orbit (remember to post those letters!) we are unfortunately entering the toughest part of the journey.

At the time of your travel, after slinging out from the moon, you will have a little over 92,895,679 miles to go, and you are traveling on gravity alone. Don't worry, you WILL accelerate. Acceleration is occurring once you leave moon-orbit but you will not truly appreciate it due to the great vastness of space and our incredible menus!

But the suicidal fifty million miles are not trivially named. Appreciate that all your fellow passengers, like you, are so rich they had no lives back on earth, they have no personality, and they have nothing to do except try to buy and sell things, make things, pollute etc.

And you will all be doing this to each other for the next fifty million miles.

Until THE ACCELERATION...

The Great American Oil Spill

by
Brian Sorrell

"An oil spill is the release of crude oil into the natural environment, usually the ocean."

"A release event is described as a discharge of oil in harmful quantities that violate applicable water quality standards; caused a film, sheen, or discoloration of the water surface; or cause a sludge or emulsion deposit beneath the water surface."

These are some of the standards by which we measure what counts as an oil spill. One might formulate a broader definition, one that includes "release events" affecting solid land, affecting plant life, animal life, even affecting our cultural landscape. A broader definition of an oil spill is "any discharge of a petroleum-based product, whether deliberate or accidental, that adversely or measurably alters a natural or cultural landscape."

Founded in 1970, the EPA strictly regulates oil spill cleanup. In 1968, the government drafted "The National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan," which established an infrastructure for reporting and dealing with ecological disasters. The Clean Water Act of 1972 granted authority to both the EPA and to the Coast Guard to establish prevention and clean-up programs to deal with oil and other hazardous chemical spills. The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 expanded the EPA's and the Coast Guard's authority, in addition to establishing a cleanup trust fund—derived from oil taxes. This is a mere sampling of the legislation.

Yet even in the face of such legislation, since 1824, Media news organizations, local and federal governments, even environmental watchdogs have been covering up the largest oil spill in the history of humanity.

Roads.

"Today, 96% of all paved roads and streets in the U.S. - almost two million miles - are surfaced with asphalt. Almost all paving asphalt used today is obtained by processing crude oils." So claims the inadvertent origin of our exposé, *The History Of Roads And Asphalt*. Indeed, there is an oil spill in America over two million miles long. It's time we did something about it.

A long-standing policy of dumping and pressing asphalt on to the Earth's surface unquestionably counts as an oil spill. What makes the act all the more criminal is its deliberate nature—we have intentionally orchestrated a controlled dump, knowing the historically horrific impacts of chemical and oil spills.

One component of the spill-damage is, clearly, environmental. It is difficult to find a location in America where a road is not visible. Certainly, the overwhelming majority of Americans have never been anywhere that there *aren't* roads. Of necessity, this has an enormous impact on a peculiarly American attitude toward the natural world—there is no state of nature.

Another component of the spill-damage is both cultural and epistemological. The two are intimately connected. Roads are facilitators of travel. To lay roads in Ur was to enable

ancient peoples easier access to each other; they were, in a sense, a cornerstone of modern civilization. In the US, roads string suburbs to urban areas, thus creating metropolitan districts, between which highways are the lifelines of commerce. Roads, then, are the foundation upon which modern living has been built.

Epistemologically, the way that we come to know the world around us depends deeply on asphalt infrastructure. We see cities and suburbs from the road—in school busses, in the family station wagon, even from bicycles. Beat poets wrote about how they came to know life on the road, be it walking or riding. Roads underlie the possibility of connecting empirical knowledge of one place with empirical knowledge of another. Surely, without such fast and easy travel available, our knowledge of the world and the peoples in it would not be what it is.

Given the apparent necessity of roads, the pressing question is: what actions can we take?

There are many approaches to the problem, but it is imperative that we begin to dismantle this ecological disaster as quickly as practicably possible. First, we need to raise awareness of the most obvious, yet unobserved, problem in human history. We can do this by advertising the broad and agreeable definition of an oil spill. Advertisements might take the form of bumper stickers, billboards, airplane banners, even blimp advertisements—the important thing is, ironically enough, to open the eyes of America's drivers *while they're driving*. Tell them to take a step back and think about the toxicity of the substance upon which they are driving.

Next, we need to begin the formation of citizens' action groups. These groups will have to be trained in a new form of spill-cleanup. This is not like squeegeeing a film from the ocean's surface, or bathing a slick sea lion. This is a solid, entrenched spill that will require jackhammering and back breaking labor. Citizens' action groups should pair up with local health clubs and develop physical training programs to ensure that the citizenry is duly prepared for the enormity of the task that they face.

To adequately dismantle and properly dispose of the road system, we will need one of the largest work-forces ever known on the planet. This workforce will have to be subsidized by the federal government. The strongest and sturdiest among the citizenry will be called upon to alter their lives and lifestyles, quitting their day-jobs to take on a new role in the clean-up effort. The government will have to promise *at least* equal pay and benefits to all who voluntarily sign up for the campaign.

Absent a large enough (paid) volunteer effort, the government will have to institute a conscription of sorts. Reasonably, we could expect those who have historically driven the biggest automobiles to be drafted first. This could be determined by vehicle registration records. That group could be cross-referenced with those aged 18-34—the overlapping citizens being the first to go.

Military involvement cannot be discounted. In fact, military involvement will probably be necessary, as they possess the largest fleet of off-road vehicles in the world. These vehicles will be necessary to transport workers to their new jobs, since the roads as we know them will gradually disappear.

Once the spill is reduced to piles of crude rubble, we must "harvest" the piles and remove them to remote locations—ideally back from whence they came. We should consider refilling quarries as much as practical. Once filled, we will have to identify sound storage

locations, far enough from drinking-water sources, forests and farms that the toxins of the asphalt can no longer infect the citizenry.

Once the asphalt roads have been removed and properly disposed, then we can address the possibility of building alternative roads, such as those made of timber in Glastonbury, England, or responsibly constructed cobble-stone roads found throughout the world—sometimes called "macadam" roads.

Doubtless, this project will be a tough sell to a populous who has never known a different means of transportation.

Perhaps this is the news that will motivate the populous the most: In late 2003, "The National Chemical Cleanup Task Force" (NCCTF) announced the results of a 12 year study tracking asphalt residue in ground and drinking water and on farmlands. Staggeringly, run-off from roads contains petroleum-based contaminants, some say, from the asphalt itself. Alternative interpretations emphasize roads' sponge-like qualities: i.e., oils and lubricants from automobiles soak into the tar and wash away in rain storms. Whatever the case, there is no denying that drinking water is contaminated with road-asphalt-based by-products.

Given this spate of facts, the general population should be convinced that it is beyond time to begin cleaning up the biggest ecological disaster in the history of our country.

Furthermore, an educated citizenry will likely begin to adopt similarly ecologically beneficial green programs. For example, elected officials might look to closing recently opened holes in environmental laws that provide the possibility of drilling for more oil on federally protected lands. The need to drill more oil will be reduced when the grand oil spill has been cleaned up.

Consider: The United States consumes 20 million barrels of oil every day, almost half of which goes to fueling automobiles. This implies, after the roads have been cleared, that the US would use 10 million fewer barrels of oil a day. On top of this obvious environmental benefit, this represents the only major suggestion buzzing around the media today that promotes *true* energy independence.

One could argue more abstractly that a national road-removal program will help to bolster America's educational record. Currently, the products of our educational systems are well below standards. Acts such as "No Child Left Behind" have failed both in conception and in implementation—particularly in funding. Abstractly, we might argue that the family of reasons for these failures is surnamed "community." Road removal programs, of necessity, will tie communities closer together. Suburban sprawl will be recognized as the culturally divisive phenomenon that it is, and localism will once again take hold of communities. Closer familial and communal ties, historically, have been directly linked to improved school performance.

Closer community bonds will inevitably reduce individualized senses of "entitlement," sometimes called "entitlement egoism," that lead to poor student performance and irresponsible urban development. When entitlement egoism is sufficiently purged from the American conscience, then progress will again be *possible* in arts, education, hard sciences and social reforms. America will be reborn as the residue of a misunderstood and divisive infrastructure is banished from the landscape.

Millions of miles of black ribbon severing ties across America are squarely to blame for

abstract social divisions and ecological disaster. The desperate need to clean up this environmental and cultural mess cannot be understated.

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Office Drawer Turned Daring New Art Showcase
by
Carolee Klimchuck



You'd be better off dead than to miss the tour de force that is Drawer@676's "I Hate My Job" exhibit.

This stunning array of shapes and forms teases the viewer. It says *Come close, but not too close*. It says *Will you have the fish or will you have the chicken?* It says *Daddy wants a little sugar*.

Housed in what can only be described as an office drawer, Drawer@676 bolts onto the gallery scene in its boxiness, its matte-blackness, and its whimsical ability to roll out and roll back in, like a flight of fancy. It is the utter definition of rectangle. It offers a breath of freshly stale office air into the mixed-up *mélange* of gallery haute and artworld pretension. Drawer@676 brings a splash of certitude to woefully uncertain times.

The little-known artists represented in the show are sure to be in high demand, at least several weeks before hell freezes over.

Krieger's shock-jock meat market simulacra dynamically bursts from the ground, seemingly reaching for the sky like a Coney Island wino with the sun in his eyes. Two isolated eyeballs encased in plastic linger among the meat, as perhaps a wry commentary on disconnection, disaffection and the dystopia of the work world. The artist, flush with cash after a decade as a highly paid knife-thrower's assistant, took the job at 676 "for shits and giggles," a move she now calls "a big mistake" while others, for reasons unknown, call it "the big Lebowski." Nice work if you can get it, Krieger.

Barolo's timely and provocative shredded-up grant rejection letters hang like a hunka burnin' love in the front corner of the drawer. On loan from the permanent collection of the New Brunswick Museum of Women's Art and Craft, Barolo's work maintains its striking, somber poise with the aid of a size large binder clip, on sale now through April at Viking Office Supply. Barolo stumbled upon his coveted position at 676 by literally stepping in a pile of shit. "I was wiping dog you-know-what off my shoe when Margaret Labbert walked by and offered me a job," Barolo said, sotto voce.

The performative crown of thorns by former death row inmate Levinsky is *sine qua non*. Its cylindricality speaks to the *quid pro quo* circularity of humdrum office chatter. "I was gonna wear the thing to the opening," Levinsky volunteered, "But then I was like, 'Fuck it.'" As the Latins would say: *Res ipsa loquitur*. Multiple, repetitive, bold red stamps of "Not Authentic" underscore the socio-cultural tensions between authentic/not authentic, real/unreal, inside/outside, this/that/the other, such-and-such/so-and-so, whatup/not much.

Ream's cleverly juxtaposed images sit on sparse terrain, a punch in the gut for the soul, if you will. The works in her triptych are simultaneously light and pungent, like the watered down bitterness of Hahn's cornerstore coffee. The central work, an obfuscation of the phrase "work ethic" slaps the viewer in the mug with "WO' THIC", a phrase sure to be the rage among South Bronx youth by June. Don't be surprised if standing before this striking and sultry trio sends shivers up your spine or causes a treatable but potentially deadly skin condition called Steven-Johnson Syndrome. The central images of the two flanked pieces are much like the artist herself: woolly and mammalian.

Quizzical, sundry, naked, this bouquet of work speaks to the scared little girl in all of us.

The philosophical landscape of "I Hate My Job" hits at myriad potent queries such as—what is "hate", what is "job"? In this postmodern centrifuge, who can really say? Seriously, who? Who?!

Sordid tales, checkered pasts and dreadful employment opportunities make "IHMJ" a hoot and a holler for the entire dysfunctional family. And that includes you, Grandma Phyllis and "Uncle" Biffy. Interfacing with these works will surely either make you "wanna throw your hands in the air like you just don't care" or do "The Butt."

In the words of Jacques Derrida: "The intelligible face of the sign remains turned toward the word and the face of God," and if there is one show this season that brings us closest to the face of that rat bastard some of you know as God the Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth, it is, without a doubt, "I Hate My Job".

On view now through April 31, by appointment only.

Jezebel and the Hung-Like-A-Horse Whisperer

by
Alison Burke

Gather round my little literati children and I will tell you a tale of woe, or whoa...

Jezebel was a hussy, a true to colors tramp. Her life goal was to find a man who could give her access into the world of adult entertainment. (Porn, for those of you who are idiots.) It was not that she wasn't a smart girl nor that she had no other talent; it was simply that she enjoyed being different. Instead of the nine-to-five girl she was somewhere between the 11pm and 3am types, the on her back type.

Her frequent plastic surgeries had left her thirty year old body somewhat taut but finally, she began to look just like Barbie, only a little fatter... ok, a lot fatter. Because she knew she could never be a real star, she decided it was ok to settle for being a local one. Her daily routine consisted solely of finding men in her little town of Hefferville to make movies with her. She even began to write scripts with dialogue on her own.

It was a Tuesday afternoon and she went to the grocery store to buy some of her usual products. She picked up some food here and there but the bulk of her items were sexual in nature, like the economy sized pack of condoms, fraternity strength, but of course and enough KY Jelly to fill a bathtub. (In fairness, she did develop a penchant for peanut butter and KY Jelly sandwiches during the filming of "I'm Going to Stick it in Your Peanut Butter") She then went next door to the hardware store, just as she did every Tuesday to do some "man huntin'" and buy some chains. (Take that Adina Howard!)

Not long after Jezebel had stepped foot in the door, her eyes met with a tall man whom she had never seen before. He was foreign, probably from one of those exotic countries like Canada, she thought to herself. As she looked him up and down, she realized he would be perfect for her new movie: "Jezebel and the Hung-Like-A-Horse Whisperer." He was the kind of guy who could make her famous!

She pranced up to him, "I have a proposition for you." She went on to explain her idea, being as that all men are whores; he agreed to do her movie. They decided to meet that night and start filming her movie but they would need practice first. Jezebel hurried home and prepared for her visitor.

Because she liked to be really freaky, she decided that they would start off with some role-playing and then move into the more erotic movie rendition. After laying her wardrobe selection out on the bed, the fruit of the loom giant bunch of grapes costume, she lit some candles and set up her camera. She waited excitedly and watched some of her old movies to get her in the mood, the kind of mood that anyone dressed in a grape costume would need previous to some serious rimming. She waited longingly and changed many times before finally settling down in her most highly sensual ensemble. It was ten-fifteen when the knock came on the door.

"Let's hope that's not the only knocking that will go on tonight." She said aloud as she raced to the door. She opened it to reveal her dream man standing there. "Oh, I see you've brought your own costume," she stated, checking out his ass.

He was dressed as the Indian from the Village People. Jezebel contemplated all the fun positions the two could tangle themselves into. "I don't even know your name." He replied something along the lines that it didn't matter but she was too busy fantasizing to care.

He walked up to her awkwardly, thieving a sheet wedgie from its resting crack and demanded his money for the film. Having no money to give the man, she promised him that once the movie was sold, he would get half the earnings. He agreed and then began to get into character, both literally and figuratively speaking.

He approached Jezebel, knocked her vase from her kitchen table and threw her on top of it. (The table, not the broken vase shards.) His hand slid up her leg, then to her thigh, "This is it," she thought. Then just before he slid home, he stopped. "What is it?" Jezebel inquired impatiently. His eyes were fixed on something; she followed his stare which lead her directly to the entertainment center.

"Wow! That's a big TV, eh? Must be good for watching hockey games and waffle making shows, eh?" Suddenly she noticed the dim light in his eyes. He was the kind of guy who was only good for a fuck. Jezebel began to wonder if he would even be able to read his lines, in fact, she was sure he couldn't read. She didn't care.

Holding his body close to hers, she felt the tender feathers press against her nose and the heat of their bodies was too enticing to worry about such details. He began to remove her clown outfit. (Oh, I didn't mention she was dressed as a clown? Clowns are sexy.) He began to undress her. He started with the curly red wig and ball nose, then he proceeded to remove what was left of her attire, culminating in the removal of monkeys-in-bumper-cars-anal beads, which she felt lent just the right authenticity to a pornographic clown.

He, On the other hand wasn't too hard to undress, all she had to do was take off his feathered vest because he had come without pants. He refused to remove the headdress, but she didn't care. He mentioned something about it making him feel like the "last Mohican."

They tore into each other like hamsters on crack; not just because they were banging like no tomorrow but also because they both had those huge front teeth one would associate with rodents. Their physical love knew no terminal velocity. This became quite apparent when the table gave out underneath them. The table did not share their stamina.

Jezebel decided it was the perfect time to begin filming the movie. She briefly discussed his lines but could only think of his tomahawk inside her. Her desire for his hot man cream was overwhelming and she decided that a little more practice wouldn't hurt. They did it everywhere, on the sofa, the tub, even on the stairs. They began to get dirty on the stove but she burned her butt on the burner which had previously been cooking something. Secretly she kind of liked it but didn't want to appear abnormal to the man (because having sex with a total stranger is completely normal and acceptable). Their professional positions made the Karma Sutra look elementary.

Her Favorite position was when he had her suspended by her ankles between the tub and toilet. It would have been perfect if she hadn't kept smacking her head against the bowl like an angry pendulum. Still, even the discomfort of the porcelain cracking against her cranium was no match for what was smacking the other end.

It had been about three or four hours before the two began taping their horizontal tango, despite the fact that it wasn't always horizontal. She decided to forgo the script and make a movie about pure animal attraction, unscripted. It wasn't what she had hoped for but she hadn't planned on an illiterate Canadian either.

They made quasi-passionate love for the entirety of the night until the wee hours of the morning, when he was forced to go to his day job at the local taco bell, which was also the location for his favorite cuisine. Jezebel was excited to know that he had such discriminating tastes and that he still enjoyed what they did. (Yeah, you pretend you don't know what I mean, but I see that smirk.)

The next morning without even editing the tape she took it down to the local porn store. Hard-on Harry was waiting there to buy her video and put it out for distribution to Hefferville. She gave him the tape not knowing that it would become the most famous pornographic film in history. The film went on to sweep all categories of the Porn Oscars and won several "Stiffy" awards, including most believable Indian Chief. Within a year, Jezebel became the most famous adult entertainer in the country. Her dream had come to fruition and she was living like a true porn star- with inexplicable itching. As for the Canadian, he was deported back to Canada where he spent the rest of his life working at a Taco Bell.

The end, eh?

This Gum Tastes Like Rubber
by
Kurt Smith

The whole thing started with what Barbara said at the Chinese restaurant.

I had just taken a fairly large mouthful of pork fried rice when, with one eyebrow raised and a smirky smile on her glossy lips, she suggested that we should "wait to have dessert later." At first I thought she meant going to some other place where we could order things with ice cream or chocolate, but it struck me, I guess because of the eyebrow, that she was talking about something else entirely. As I finished my last fried prawn, I realized I had just been offered an absolute, unquestioned, guaranteed romp in the hay, a for-sure evening of groping in the upholstery. This girl had as much as said outright, I want to have sex with you and I mean right away. And in my opinion it was about time. I mean, hey, we'd been going together for almost a week.

As soon as I figured everything out it occurred to me that I'd probably need to buy some kind of protection. The proper and the smart thing to do these days, right?

Where to go? Drug store? Super market? Even gas stations had them.

Wait! Men's rooms have condoms.

Men's rooms in restaurants.

I'm in a restaurant!

Is this one smart guy, or what? Well, what did you expect; I'll be eighteen in a month.

After we finished the meal, I told Barbara I'd just be a second, and scurried into the men's room. Sure enough, right on the wall next to the mirror-not one, but two dispensers. This was truly my lucky night.

I waited for a guy to leave, pretending to be combing my hair. When he left I studied the machines briefly. Pictures of couples practically passing out from ecstasy and words like "tickler" and "fulfillment" and "French" adorned one of the tall narrow metal boxes beside the towel dispenser. The other one, not nearly as ornate, simply gave the brand and some stuff about unsafe sex. I'd never actually seen or heard anyone buying a condom in a men's room before.

And no wonder. You have to put in a quarter, turn a handle that makes the sound of marbles rolling into a bucket, then put in another quarter and do it all over again. But of course, I didn't know all this at the time.

Just as I was about to decide which machine to use, another guy came in. I went to the basin, washed my hands, and combed my hair again. After what seemed like a couple of eternities I figured the guy was probably fresh from a cider drinking contest or something. I'd washed my hands three times by the time he left.

I wasn't exactly sure which of the two machines to use, but by now I really needed to get a

move on. Just then another guy came in and went into a stall. Damn! I started washing my hands again, which by now were red and starting to wrinkle. He came out and watched me a second in the mirror.

"How you doing?" he smiled.

"Good." I took out my comb and started on my hair again, hoping he wasn't gay or something.

He kept watching me.

"You need change?"

"What?"

"Change? You need some quarters for that thing?" He motioned with his head toward the dispenser.

"Nah," trying to sound as nonchalant as possible. I could feel a sweat bead working its way down my back.

He smiled and headed for the door. "Have a nice night."

"Thanks. You, too."

How the hell did he know what I was doing?

When he was gone, I lunged into action. Without reading exactly what I was getting, I selected the machine with all the cool pictures, dropped in the first quarter, turned the handle...rat a tat tat, rat a tat tat... then the second quarter, rat a tat tat, rat a tat tat. grabbed my "gumball" from the machine and shoved it in my pocket.

I checked the mirror once more, wiped my sweaty forehead with a paper towel, and hurried out to where Barbara stood waiting for me. I just knew everyone in the restaurant would have heard the machine-gun condom dispenser dispensing, and would be pointing and snickering at me when I came out. But Barbara was the only one pointing.

"What took you so long?"

"There was a bunch of guys in there. Long line."

Fibs and things didn't easily fool Barbara. I could tell this one wasn't going to have an easy time of it.

"I've been standing here for five minutes and only two men have come out of there, Larry. Are the others all still in there, or what?"

"Just forget it, okay. I don't ask you what you do when you use the bathroom."

This seemed to work. She shrugged and mumbled something, and then we left.

We sped toward her place. Barbara had led me to believe that this was the night—the night when we were finally going to “do it.” Naturally, I assumed her parents were gone. All the way to her place I visualized taking off her clothes, putting my hands all over her body, she putting her hands on mine, hands all over the place! Kissing, touching, fondling...

“Larry!”

“What?”

“You just drove past my driveway.”

“Oh. Sorry.” I circled the block and parked in front of the well-lighted house. Okay, so we’ll do it in the driveway. No problem.

I was aware for the first time how my thighs were so tense they could barely spread my legs apart. I hoped she wasn’t having the same problem.

“Wow, that was some meal,” I offered, thinking there should be some attempt at small talk before engaging in a full frontal assault.

“Yeah. It was really nice.” She moved slightly closer to me.

“So, everything okay?” I took her hand in mine.

“Sure. I’m fine. You fine?” She squeezed my hand in hers.

“Oh, I’m very fine.”

I knew it was going to be a piece of cake from here on in. This girl was ready. I had waited longer than any guy should have to, and the time was now.

We kissed for a short while and my hands began working their way around her body, just like in my fantasy. Shoulders, neck, back, front. It was then, at the “front”, when she moved my hand and said it was getting late and she’d better go in.

“What do you mean, go in?”

“In. You know, like “in.” I’ll walk into my place and be inside. In.”

“But... what about... you know... dessert?”

“What are you talking about?”

“Dessert. I thought we were going to, you know, have dessert?”

“You want dessert?”

“You know what I mean. You said that we’d have dessert later. I thought you meant...”

“Larry! Is that what you were thinking? Do you think that I meant in that way?”

I swallowed. "Well, no, I guess not. Well, I kinda did."

"Well it's not what I meant, Larry. Not even close. I just meant kissing. That's all."

"Oh."

"Larry, my mom and dad are less than... ten feet away." I jerked my head around, thinking they were standing beside the car.

"Well, I mean they're in the house. But they're up. They stay up late. Besides," she went on, "we've talked about this. You know I've made a vow to keep myself pure for the man who will be my husband. Can you understand that?"

"Yeah. I guess."

"Well then I guess you should have known how I'd react to this. Right?"

I nodded.

The rest of the conversation, which lasted another five minutes or so, stayed pretty much in this vein. When she finally got out she left me with little more than a few worn out fantasies and a new condom.

I drove back into town thinking how Chinese never stays with you very long. I pulled in at Burgers Inc. for a couple of cheeseburgers. The girl who waited on me was someone I knew from high school. I didn't know her very well, but I'd always admired her from a distance. Annika something. Nice legs.

"How you doing tonight?"

She smiled. "Good. How's about you?"

"Oh, you know."

She took my order then stayed and talked with me until some older woman came by and scowled at her. She waited on some other guys, but then came back and we talked some more.

"I get a break in about a couple minutes. Want some company while you eat?"

"Sure."

A little while later she sat in my car. She smelled like french fries, but it wasn't a bad smell.

"You're Larry, right?"

"Right. And you're Annika?"

"Right."

"Nice name."

"Thanks." She fiddled with the seat belt buckle.

Struck down with a sudden case of irreversible inarticulation, I searched for a common topic.

"So, eh, how's calculus?"

"Calculus! I'm not taking calculus."

"Oh, I thought you were. For some reason, I don't know..."

"Larry, you do know I graduated. Last year... in the same class with you."

"Of course I know. I just meant, well, maybe like in community college or something. I don't know. Are you going to school?"

"No, I work here is all."

We sat in an uncomfortable silence for a while. Finally she asked, "Are you, you know, seeing someone?"

"Well, no, not really. I mean, no. Not really."

"Which is it, no, or not really."

"No. I'm not seeing anyone, like on a regular basis."

"Meaning what exactly?" She touched my shoulder with her hand.

"Well, I have dated this one girl just once or twice. But I think I'm going to not take her out any more. She's really not my type."

We talked a while and then she had to get back to work.

"Maybe I could see you sometime?" she suggested.

"When?"

"I don't know. Call me."

Suddenly everything crystallized in my ant-sized brain. "How about tonight?"

"I don't get off until ten-thirty."

"I'll be right here at ten-thirty."

"Okay, I'll look for you."

I tossed the cheeseburgers into the back seat, clenched my fist into the air and yelled "YES!" a little louder than I intended, causing a mother and her little boy in the next car over to look at me funny.

At ten thirty Annika got into my car again. She still smelled like fast food. I rolled my window down.

"Hi." My thighs had constricted again.

"Hi."

"You like to do anything in particular?"

"Oh, you know, just ride around or something."

I was doing just that—driving around aimlessly—when Annika suddenly grabbed the steering wheel and turned us onto a certain street, which led to the river road. We ended up in a parking space in the state park with about a hundred other cars.

Annika was a hot number. Before I knew it she had taken off half her clothes and half of mine. It was a going to be dessert after all—a double hot fudge over strawberry shortcake with lots of whipped cream. Jesus!

"Do you have a condom?" she panted in my ear.

By then my own river was so close to spilling over the levee that I forgot about my condom. "Oh yeah, jacket pocket."

I continued licking anything my tongue could reach (mostly shoulder, I realized) as she went through the jacket.

"Hurry." I wasn't sure I could make it through these final stages. I was about to blow apart. I could hear the sound of my loins ripping, which turned out to be the sound of the condom package being opened. Then there was a pause.

"What is this?" she asked.

"What'ya mean? It's a condom."

"I've never felt one like this before. What's it made of?"

"Let me have it." She put it in my hand. It was dark in the car, but I could feel it: rectangular, flat, and not all that rubbery. More stiff and cardboardy. I felt its edges, thinking maybe it was packing material. Nothing. I turned on the dome light.

She yelped, her bare shoulders hunching over her nakedness.

I turned off the light. "Put your top on. I need to see how to open this thing."

"I already opened it. That's all there is. It's not like any condom I've ever seen."

In the back of my mind it registered that this was not a girl who'd just jumped down off an artichoke truck.

When she had her blouse back on, I flicked the dome light and held out my prize. She looked at it and snickered. "Pretty funny, Larry. What are you planning to do with it?"

I studied the package. Across the front in large red letters: INSTANT PUSSY.

The contents resembled one of those flat bath sponges that expand with water. In fact, that's exactly what it was. A little cat sponge.

Later, when I dropped it in a glass of water, it became a little cat, which I hung from my rear view mirror, a reminder that with Chinese you better enjoy your fortune cookie because that's all the dessert you're probably going to get.

Ransom
by
Michael Hulme

When I got back to the flat, office chatter still cluttering my mind, the first thing I noticed was how quiet it was. There was no change in the pile-up of magazines, lipsticked mugs, overflowing ashtrays, discarded crop-tops and last season's cardigans, but the television was off and the bottles of nail polish were lined up on the coffee table, unopened. I turned to the window, and saw a note sellotaped to the pane. In black letters cut from various tabloids, it was a ransom demand for Amber's safe return. I sat down and thought everything through.

When I got back from the pub, the phone was ringing.

"Mister Hulme?" A voice I didn't recognise, low and hoarse, filterless cigarettes and low-grade whisky.

"Hello," I said, looking at the telephone as if it was going to show me the guy's face.

"I trust you've seen our demands."

"Who is this?"

"I don't think that matters."

"No," I said. "I don't suppose it does. Unless you want me to write you a cheque."

"So you're willing to pay?"

"Don't know," I said.

There was a pause. "Excuse me?"

"Well, she only moved in with me a couple of months ago. Suppose I pay you off, and then she dumps me a week later? I mean, you are asking for a lot of money."

"Yes," he said. "That's the point."

"True," I said. "It wouldn't be much good doing all this for, say, twelve pounds fifty. You probably spent more than that on petrol—I assume you whisked her away in a car—"

He stayed silent.

"Okay, perhaps I've seen too many movies. But a hundred grand?"

"It's simple, Mister Hulme," he said. "Do you want to see her again?"

"S'pose," I said. "We have fun together—sometimes. I'm just not sure I'm ready to commit."

He sighed heavily. "I'm not asking you to marry her."

"I should hope not! I'll need to remortgage the flat, get a loan—I'll be in no position to marry anyone."

He breathed loudly but didn't speak.

"Anyway," I said, leaning against the wall, "listen. Between you and me, I've been thinking about dumping her."

"What?"

"Well, it's just not working out, you know?"

"What are you talking about?"

My turn to sigh. I looked at the picture of her pinned to the cork noticeboard, then around the jumble sale she'd turned my flat into. "Well... It's not her, really. It's me."

"That's very noble—"

"Actually, no. It is her."

He coughed. "How do you mean?"

I threw her third favourite pair of shoes on the floor and sat down in the armchair. "She's got really annoying habits. For one thing, she talks constantly."

He chuckled. "I wouldn't know. Masking tape's a wonderful thing."

"Yes." I wondered why I'd never thought of that. "And she's messy. She scatters things all round the house."

"No big deal."

"But it is," I said, fumbling for my cigarettes. "The remote controls live on the coffee table. It's the golden rule. But, oh no—she has to wander off with them. Last week, I found one in the bathroom."

"Well," he said, "not the end of the world."

"She wants to get a puppy."

"That's a big commitment. I hate dogs."

"Me too. Then there's..."

"Yes?"

"Well," I said, "she's been round the block a bit."

"How do you mean?"

"She's had a lot of boyfriends. I mean a *lot*."

"Ah," he said. "More than one at a time?"

"Yes."

"More than one at once?"

I closed my eyes. "Yes."

"Ah," he said. "That's going to haunt you."

"Exactly."

"Anything else?"

"Now you ask," I said, "yes. She's a hopeless cook, a sloppy cleaner, and a lazy lover."

"Mmm," he said. "Best I return her, then."

"Suppose so," I said.

"No point us wasting each other's time."

"Drop her off near Chapelfield," I said. "She can get the bus from there."

"Chapelfield?"

"Yeah, you know. Near the theatre."

"Where?"

"Have you got a map?"

"Yeah."

"Then you'll find it. Provided you don't let her navigate."

"I understand," he said. "Listen—I won't say anything. It'll be better coming from you."

"Well, I guess that's that, then."

He paused. "Listen—are you sure you want to finish with her? It's just—"

"What?"

"She's really pretty."

"Oh," I said. "Thanks."

"Exquisite bone structure."

"Hey," I said, "she looks pretty rough in the mornings."

"Maybe I'll let you know." We both laughed, then he sighed. "I'd never get a woman like—what's her name?"

"Amber."

"Beautiful name. Suits her."

"Thanks. But, you know, you shouldn't give up."

"She'd never go for someone like me. She could get any guy she wanted."

"Yeah, well—if you tried talking to girls like Amber, you'd find they're just normal people underneath."

"Really?"

"Yeah," I said. "She's got many attractive, single friends who can't get dates because men are intimidated by the thought of talking to them, or else they get these cocky wide boys latching on to them only because they want something attractive pulling on their—"

"Arm?"

"Exactly. Beauty is a handicap of sorts, see?"

"I'd never thought of it like that."

"Well, now you know. Sometimes, these women just want stimulating conversation. You seem like a resourceful sort of chap. I'm sure you could think of some interesting chat. You should try it."

"Maybe," he said. "Hey—if it doesn't work, I could always kidnap her."

We both laughed.

"Good one," I said. "Some of them are bitches, though. Don't let that put you off. It's not even their fault, really. It's more the natural outcome of the opposite sex always doing exactly what you tell them to."

He went quiet again.

"So, listen," he said at last. "If you're going to finish with her, would you mind if I—"

"Not at all. Here, I'll help you. She likes boy bands, particularly Take That. It's a university 'what were we thinking?' nostalgia thing. She likes horses, Brad Pitt, acid jazz. She's vegetarian. She likes having her neck bitten, but not so it bruises. Don't, under any circumstances, slap her backside or let her catch you saying 'baby got back.'"

I could hear the scrape of pencil across paper. "Got it," he said. "My dad runs a farm. Knows all about horses. We've got several."

"Well there you go. Good luck."

"Thanks, Mister Hulme."

"No problem."

There was a click, and the line rang dead.

Seemed like a nice chap, I thought, as I put the kettle on and microwaved a burger.

Two days later, the phone rang again.

"It's me," she said.

"Amber! How are you? Where are you?"

"I'm okay, Michael. It's just..."

"What?"

"Oh God, I promised myself I wouldn't cry when I did this—"

"What is it?" I started digging through the paperwork on the table.

"Well—I've met someone else."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Fair enough."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, if you need to move on, don't let me stand in your way. What's his name?"

"He hasn't told me yet."

"Ah."

"But he's got a beautiful farmhouse. And horses."

"Lovely. That's a stroke of luck."

"Anyway, all my stuff's at yours, and we were thinking—"

"Oh, right." In the heap of paperwork, I found her last savings account statement.

"When would be convenient?"

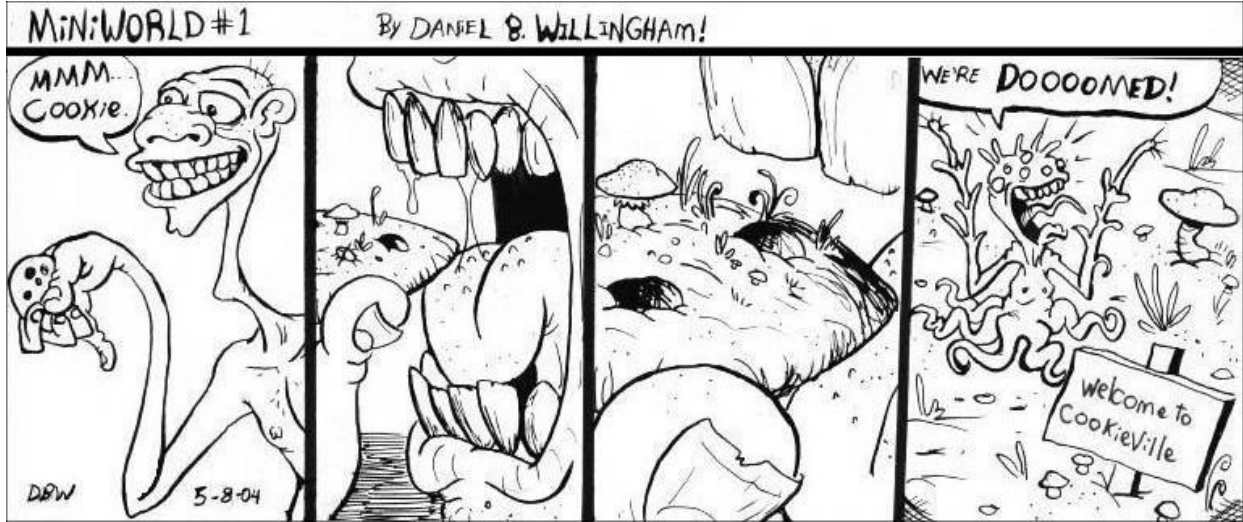
"I don't know," I said. "I'm never in these days. And, amazingly, I've just had the locks

changed."

"Come on, Michael," she said. "Don't be like this."

"Okay, okay," I said, looking at the figures in the balance column. "We can probably come to some kind of agreement."

Cookieville
by
Daniel Willingham



Crispy Reads An Interesting Poem About A King
by
Ricky Garni

CRISPY READS AN INTERESTING POEM ABOUT A KING
BUT A POEM ABOUT A KING THAT WASN'T A KING WHO DID THE USUAL KINGLY THINGS

If I Were

If I were but a king,
I would not learn
to sing.

If I were but a king,
I would hold on not
to things.

Let me give you
an example:

wildebeasts, licorice
gum drops, man o' wars,
moldy dictionaries
with tomato stains
on the dust jackets
ad infinitum

onto these things
I would not cling (s)

were I to be a king

but a king-me?
the odds, what
would they be?
I ask thee (you)

why are you not
answering my phone calls?

was it merely a fling,
a royal fling with the king?

what is the matter with thee?
wherefore art thou?

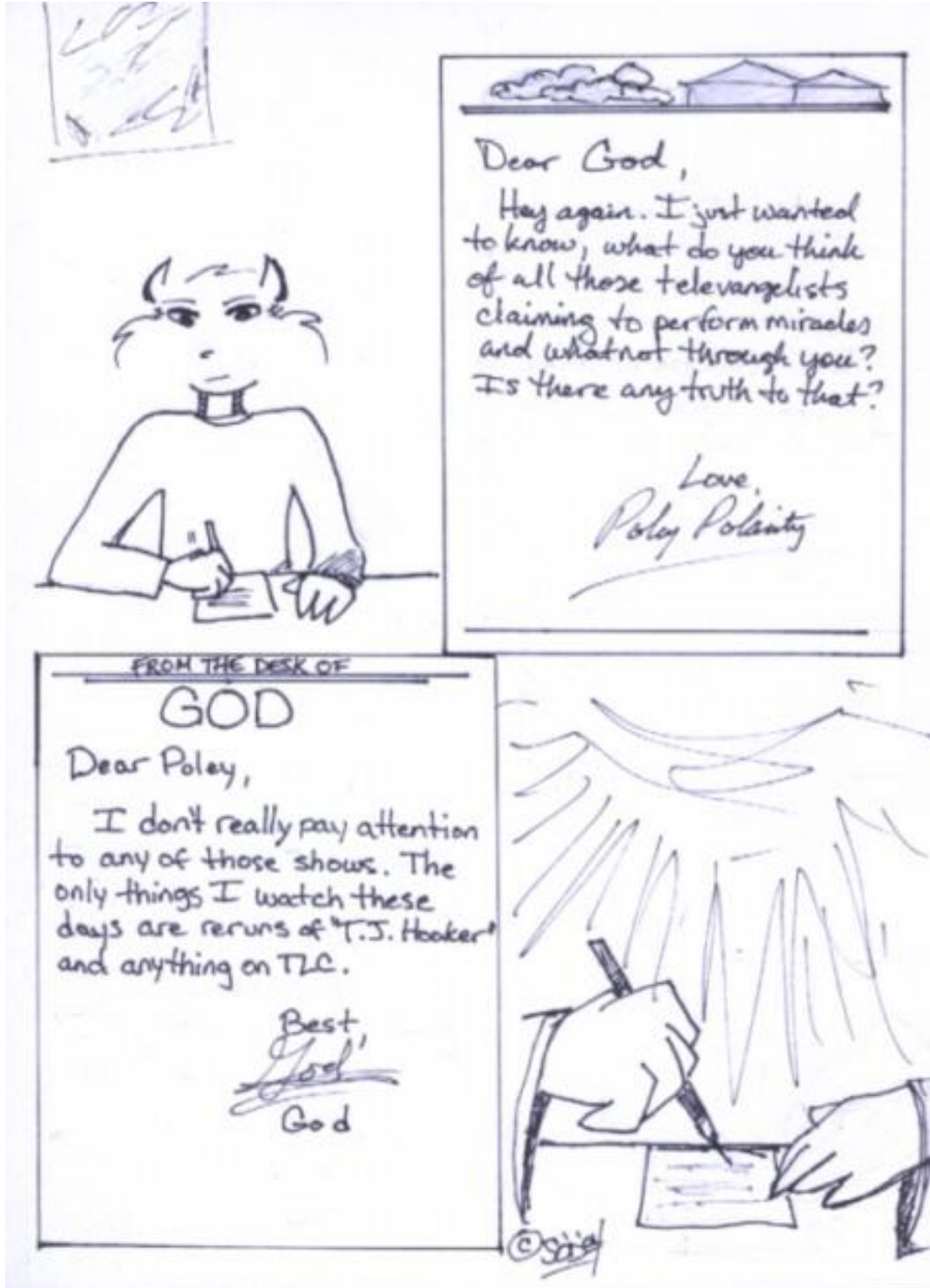
I bet I know:
I bet it's me,
let us sing, as we must
let us not forever

or ever

blame
the king



Penpals With God, Episode 1
by
Stephanie O'Donnell



Contributor Biographies

Contrary to what you might have thought about this poet, **Cat Knight** is not really a person's name at all, but a small kitten in armor.

Ella McCrystle's 2005 goal is to finally wax the *other* leg. She scribbles notes others call poems and is considering getting serious about it. PEN American Center Prison Writing Program mentor, editor of *The Hiss Quarterly* and founder of Write to Heal, Ella inappropriately breaks into Billie Holiday tunes, talks to the voices in her head and misplaces things for a living. When not in therapy, she mothers furry creatures and ponders cheese. If you happen to find her lost virginity or are interested in more of her writing, please contact her: Invoking the Serpent. (<http://thehiss.net>)

Roddy Williams is an unemployed illustrator and bad guitarist, currently seeking other very bad musicians with a view to forming a tuneless bluegrass combo. He sings better than he plays, a result of his being Welsh. (Tone-deaf Welsh children are left out on a mountain overnight. If they survive they have to attend compulsory vocal tuition). He lives in London with his partner; collects gothic stuff (like dust and things stolen from cathedrals) and has an orange goatee. He hates children, celebrities and limited edition plates.

Don't let his expert analysis fool you. **Alex Keegan** has never traveled to the sun and probably never will, thanks to a restraining order issued on seven of our solar system's planets and a hefty intergalactic bounty on his head. For details of his recent incarceration on an asteroid mining facility, go to <http://www.alexkeegan.com>.

Brian Sorrell was born nowhere near Paris though he is committed to speaking with a conspicuously faux French affectation. He did not attend primary school in the Republic of the Congo. While he was not attending Berkeley he dedicated his intellectual energy to the study of spelling. After a brief stint wrastlin' herbivorous aquatic mammals in Louisiana, he was arrested for crimes against a manatee. Serving an incomplete sentence.

Carolee Klimchock spent 18 years in Texas trying to assess the nutritional value of hogwash, four years at Smith College weighing the merits of a .8 inch margin vs. a 1 inch margin, and six of the last seven years in a self-inflicted prison of the mind. She currently resides at the top of her game. Buttloads of spam can be sent to: klimchock@hotmail.com. (Please put "delete this immediately" in the subject heading.) Stalkers can find her at: <http://epistemological.blogspot.com>.

This was found when asked for a biography for **Alison Burke**: "This piece was the bastard offspring result from a day of escalating college dares. I enjoyed it, writing it, living it, I mean... just writing it. Anyways, please feel free to bombard me with sexy hate or fan mail, so long as they ascribe to the aforementioned 'sexiness' requirement. Also, to my sexy Latin cabana boy, I hope your pants are full of jokes!"

Kurt Smith lives on the Oregon coast where he works as a principal of an elementary school when he's not playing with his 3-year old. Guitar takes up the rest of his day. Other publications include short stories, poetry, and two math puzzle books. So far, no calls from Hollywood.

Michael Hulme once spent a nightmarish time in a robot insane asylum. But it's almost over now.

Daniel B. Willingham is currently 22 years old and going to school to learn what a bad artist he really is. He draws comics to escape from reality and to amuse complete strangers. He has his own website, <http://headdoctor.keenspace.com>, where he posts comics and drawings.

Ricky Garni has devoted many years to the illustrated biographical study of the enigmatic early 20th century Andalusian symbolist poet CRISPY FLOTILLA. A work in progress, Mr. Garni now struggles to capture in prose the painful later years of Mr. Flotilla when, broken and penniless, the brilliant poet spent his last days living in obscurity with a cocktail waitress known only as Captain Bob.

Born and raised in New York, **Stephanie O'Donnell** created the character "Poley Polarity" when she was 10 years old. At age 15, she had the character copyrighted on the advice of her father, a full time artist who also was interested in cartooning in his youth. Recently, Stephanie has developed her characters into the comic strip "The Original Nutty Funsters", which ran during the 2004 summer edition of the K-State Collegian. Bill Watterson's "Calvin and Hobbes" is at the top of her list of major influences.