

# ◇ Defenestration ◇

## Volume II, Issue VII

### Table of Contents

The <i>Defenestration</i> Sonnet Contest . . . . .	2
Arlene Ang, "The Seduction of Andrew" . . . . .	3
Haratron's Kidnapper, "Rhyme and Ransom" . . . . .	4
Crispin Weatherall, "What is it 'bout the man of words" . . . . .	5
Anna Psitos, "In view of those I do not know about" . . . . .	6
Bernie Poliquin, "Sonnet XVIII Reloaded" . . . . .	7
Anna Psitos, "An Injurious Fall, of When Humor Strikes" . . . . .	8
Jason Arbogast, "Dee's Zine" . . . . .	10
Jeff Nowak, "My Fool" . . . . .	20
Paul B. Hertneky, "An Overdue Proposal" . . . . .	25
Rob Rosen, "Porno For The Lord" . . . . .	26
Ricky Garni, "Love From, Of Course, Crispy" . . . . .	31
Stephanie O'Donnell, "Penpals With God, Episode 4" . . . . .	32
Contributor Biographies . . . . .	33

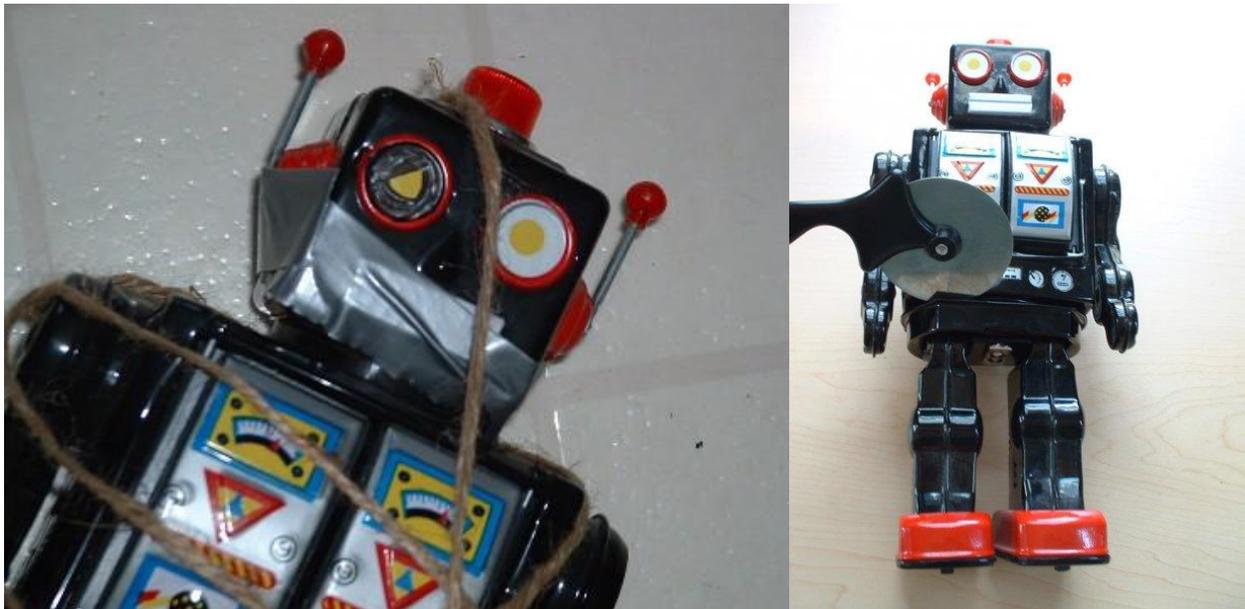
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## **The *Defenestration* Sonnet Contest** by **The *Defenestration* Crew**

Back in 2005, we decided to hold our first-ever contest. It has so far been the only contest that we've done, but that only proves that it was awesome and that nothing could ever possibly top it, *ever*.

Eileen and Genevieve decided that the contest should involve sonnets written about Andrew. It was an insane idea, the kind of idea that attracted insane people to it.

During the reading period for the contest, we received an entry from an unnamed person who claimed they had kidnapped our newsletter robot, Haratron. If the kidnapper didn't win first place, then horrible things were going to happen to Haratron. This isn't the sort of thing we'd normally believe, except the kidnapper supplied photographs.



When the winners were finally announced, Arlene Ang won first place, followed by "Haratron's Kidnapper" in second and Crispin Weatherall in third. We later learned that the kidnapper was, in fact, Crispin Weatherall, a general ne'er-do-well. The poems in this issue of *Defenestration* are all from that contest: the first-, second-, and third-place winners, as well as runners-up Anna Psitos and Bernie Poliquin.

**The Seduction of Andrew**  
**From a Bisexual Simian**  
**by**  
**Arlene Ang**

My pretty-pimp prince of opposable  
allure on thumbs, where has your robot gone?  
Like plastic spoons, it is disposable  
the way Eileen's birth name is really John.  
Forget about that Haratron, I'm here:  
your prime mate with a tray of apple pie  
and root beer sweating from the mug. My dear,  
I'll even let you glimpse my hairy thigh.  
I'll be your cat, your Fry, your color green,  
your Precious and your clothing store on fire.  
I swear to be a faithful chimp, your Queen  
Kong in a skimpy Anime attire.  
My sweet, my heart, won't you exchange my vow?  
Your girlfriend wants to have my babies now.

**Rhyme And Ransom**  
**by**  
**Haratron's Kidnapper**

Shall I compare thee to a rose bouquet?  
Thou art more fragrant and less thorny.  
Each time I see the face of Andrew Kaye  
I lose my breath, entranced, and slightly horny.  
For though I praise Eileen and Genevieve,  
I cannot hide the flame within my breast.  
My heart of hearts to Andrew's soul doth cleave  
Maker of mirth, yet love surpasses jest.  
With alabaster skin and hair like silk  
Such beauty would make heavn'ly Paris weep.  
His words of wit as sweet as mothers milk  
(I whisper them at night, before I sleep).  
Had I ten thousand monkeys at my whim,  
I'd shed a tear, and give them all to him.

**What is it 'bout the man of words**  
**by**  
**Crispin Weatherall**

What is it 'bout the man of words  
That fortune finds so fit for idle sport?  
Clerks and lawyers sail like sea-born birds  
But writers find their ships still stuck in port.  
And Andrew, not content with odds so strained  
Insists on bending genres to his will.  
A splash of Asimov, a dash of Twain  
A cocktail, but to editors, a swill.  
Although he prays to Adams' *Guide* for aid  
His mailbox echoes empty like a tomb.  
Like songs unsung, like concerts never played  
The works of Andrew Kaye don't leave the womb.  
    But someday we'll all say "We knew him when."  
    With any luck, we won't be dead by then.

**In view of all I do not know about**  
**by**  
**Anna Psitos**

In view of all I do not know about  
He who does demand be called "Your Grace,"  
I realize some names will cause a pout.  
Like Pookie, Monkey Boy, and Pillow Case.  
But Andrew does at other times enjoy  
A romp amongst the wild daffodils,  
And frequently he will, alas, employ  
What some call bad but he calls 'happy pills.'  
And so, my friend who has as yet to meet  
A nobler soul than those you know at work,  
I'm sure the picture will not be complete  
Until you know he really is a jerk.  
My ode to Andrew is now at a close.  
I will another never to compose.

**Sonnet XVIII Reloaded**  
by  
**Bernie Poliquin**

Shall I compare thee to an arcade game?

Our brave Italian sidekick clad in green

In pixilated glory takes the stage,

But never gets the girl, or so it seems.

Our tragic hero curses at his plight,

To fight without the slightest hint of praise;

While red-clothed fellows bow into spotlight,

He slinks away to dream of former days

Of power pellet Pac Man super strength

When comfort could be found in plastic spoons,

In primate thumbs of variable length

And humming themes from badly drawn cartoons,

But two dimensions are but all too brief

To sonnetize our editor-in-chief

**An Injurious Fall or, When Humor Strikes**  
by  
**Anna Psitos**

"And so, Mrs. Musgrove, I'm sorry to say that Louisa is unconscious, most likely at death's door."

"Oh, my precious girl!! Father, what are we to do?! Oh, I feel faint!!" The shrieking woman fanned herself rapidly, causing the candles to gutter. As she staggered, Anne Eliot lunged to save the sideboard, glaring at her erstwhile lover.

"Couldn't you have phrased that better?" she hissed.

"Alas, my unacknowledged love, it was not possible." Mrs. Musgrove's volume increased. "If I had not been so slow, she would be here with us today." Upon Mr. Musgrove's murderous glare (his wife had begun thrashing about) Capt. Wentworth said, "Nay, good sir, you cannot convince me. Louisa's accident is my fault and I must stand here and brood over my ill luck."

"Oh for heaven's sake! This isn't Wuthering Heights! There is nothing in this book about brooding!" Anne's exasperation was reaching new heights. To think that she had once thought him a capable man!

"Indeed my heart's desire that I must ignore? I can only reflect on how, if she survives I am honor-bound to one I do not love."

"If?! Honor-bound?! Oh, Father, my heart is turning somersaults!" Mrs. Musgrove wailed.

"Listen, Captain. Perhaps you can go elsewhere and brood? There is no way I can calm my wife down if you keep referring to this tragedy."

Mrs. Musgrove's wailing reached a keening pitch, causing the hounds to howl in pain. As the hair-tearing and teeth-gnashing began, but before the rending of garments, Mr. Musgrove poured a pitcher of water over his wife's head. "Anne," he said, "I know I'm supposed to go to Bath, but do you think you might go instead? If this keeps up you won't be able to help, but if I succeed in sedating her, I'd hate to miss the best part of hunting season."

"But... I'm supposed to stay here and gaze mournfully out the window from the piano bench thinking of the joy I lost when that slag looked at Frederick cross-eyed!"

Capt. Wentworth sighed. "Louisa is so beautiful when she makes odd faces. Have you seen her monkey face?" He glanced around at the bemused expressions. "I mean, I cannot possibly return with Anne once again so close to me. I might be forced to act upon my suppressed love and do something roguish!"

With alacrity Anne ran outside and jumped into the waiting carriage. "In that case, what are we waiting for?"

"Oh, temptress of my soul, you are too much for me!" He dashed out the door to remove her from the carriage. The melodrama was cut short by the front door slamming.

Mr. Musgrove shook his head and turned to his wife. "Kids these days. When I was young we didn't talk half as much, did we, Mother?" His wife at this point had fainted from the turmoil and was unable to respond to his wagging eyebrows.

The next day in Lyme...

"Oh woe! How am I ever apologize for my inconstancy towards my beloved Anne?"

"Ah, so you do love her?" The sage Captain Harville nodded. "I thought as much. We seamen may walk with a rolling gait and drink too much when on land, but love? Love is as clear as a French privateer off the larboard."

"But my previous attentions to Louisa have made me hers, if she so desires. And Anne still does not know I have realized what a fool I have been!"

"Not if what I heard her tell Mary is true. To be honest, I'm rather jealous: Mary would never agree to half those things. You have picked up the most unique tricks in your travels, Frederick. And where did you get the tennis balls?" Charles Musgrove looked puzzled.

"I first learned of that trick when we were in the West Indies and the lady in question used coconuts. But as there were no coconuts on hand and someone had left tennis balls in the bench..."

"You got her to do the coconut trick?!" exclaimed Capt. Harville. "You truly do have an exceptional woman, Frederick."

Frederick ran a hand through his dark, tousled hair. "You don't know the half of it. Listen to this." The men leaned in for a good gossip session when Anne herself ran in. "She's awake! She's alive!" and ran out again.

"Now, gentlemen," said Frederick with a sigh, "my fate is sealed. I must give up the amazing and talented Anne for the mediocre Louisa. Is there no one who can save me and straighten out the plot?"

Trumpets blared. "Here I come to save the day!" Capt. Benwick leapt into the doorway, hands on hips and chest puffed out. "I shall read to her gloomy poetry in my soothing voice and she will soon be mine! For though I loved another, whose name I have forgotten, I shall replace her with Louisa of the pliable brain. Make quick your escape while my convenient plot device distracts the others!"

Frederick jumped up, eyes wild with lust and freedom. He dashed past his savior in search of his one true love. "Anne!" he cried. "I love you! You pierce my soul! Tell me I am not too late, etc., etc. I was a fool, have loved none but you! She was a mere toy, a distraction from the burning passion I feel for you. I realize now that nothing can conquer my feelings. Can you forgive me?"

"Yes!"

"Will you marry me?"

"Do you have more tennis balls?"

**Dee's Zine**  
by  
**Jason Arbogast**

Cow patties.

That's what I thought Dee was talking about after explaining himself to me. That, and that he'd found a new way to murder the English language.

Last Wednesday night, Dee and I were sitting down, drinking mochas at one of Kalamazoo's few remaining coffee shops, pretending to be yuppies, when he broke character for an important (for him) announcement.

"I've got this zine out on OP Avenue you've gotta see."

I put my mocha down and just stared at him. "A sign?" I said levelly. "Of what? The end of the world?"

The image of a chunk of plywood with "Just to let you guys know, the world is ending next week. Sorry about that." written in black paint and signed by Jesus briefly flitted through my head.

"Zine, not sign," he said, as if expecting this. "You know, a collection, like in magazine."

I raised an eyebrow. Dee had come up with some pretty strange stuff in the time I'd known him, and this one was fairly typical of him, but it had the promise of being a bit more interesting than his other ideas. With the possible exception of the Church of Dee that he'd tried to found the previous January to get tax exempt status. That one still held a special place in my heart just for the audacity of its moral turpitude.

I guess Dee could best be summed up by saying that his parents had named him after Dee Snyder from Twisted Sister, and that he'd more than lived up to the name.

"How is a magazine a collection of things?" I asked. "Unless maga is Latin for article or story, I don't see it."

Dee waved me off. "An e-zine is a collection of e-stories. It makes sense."

"But it's not pronounced 'zine.' It's pronounced 'zeen.'"

"Not if it's by itself. Then it's zine. If there's a silent e at the end of a word, then the vowel is long. Elementary school stuff, man."

A breaker tripped in my head as I tried to get through this example of a poor logic quagmire and I was forced to just look at him for a moment as I attempted to figure out where to start a counter-argument.

Finally, I said, "It's not a word, it's a stem, or a suffix, or something. Normal rules don't apply."

Dee shook his head. "Then if I make up the word I get to say it however I want. And I say it's 'zine,' and it means a collection of stuff." He crossed his arms in triumph.

I forced myself to just give it up and move on. "What's your collection of?"

He smiled and I knew what he was going to say. "I have to show you."

I narrowed my eyes. I knew what was on OP Avenue, and that it could be one of two things. "This better not be a collection of your favorite cow patties from the field out there."

Dee wrinkled his nose. "Ugh. No way in hell I'm touching cow crap. That's the reason for the hole in the ozone layer."

"Cow farts are," I corrected. "I saw that article."

This left one option. "I'm not going out to a cemetery, by myself, with you at night. I've read at least as much horror as you have."

Dee leaned forward a bit. "Oh come on! You've got to. I'll even let you bring an ax if you're afraid."

"Which just means you'll have a shotgun or something out there," I said half-jokingly. You never knew with Dee. "Not going to happen."

"You'll love this, though! It's so cool."

I shrugged and turned my hands up. "What, are we in sixth grade now? There's no way I'm going out there at night."

"Fine," he said, deflating a bit. "We can go tomorrow afternoon."

I hadn't been expecting this. "Really?" I said doubtfully.

"If you're going to be that big of a wuss about it."

I thought about it for moment and then shrugged and said, "Sure. Why not?"

The smile came back to Dee's face. "Cool. I'll pick you up at one."

\*\*\*

The trip out there took about ten minutes in Dee's '89 red Ford Ranger. I lived on the other side of town, just off of West Main, but it was easy enough to just follow it to Westnedge, and then hit Kilgore and follow it into cow country and 35th Street, which we only had to follow for a few miles out to OP Avenue. The cemetery was a mile down OP and on the left. A good-sized river crossed under the road not even fifty feet further down. It being mid-May, the reek of cows was everywhere.

"You're gonna love this," Dee said as we got out of his truck.

"You do know," I started, hefting my hatchet onto my shoulder just for the look of the thing,

"that after all this build up, if you don't have a collection, excuse me, 'zine,' of gold coins or dead mimes, I'm going to be pretty disappointed."

"Relax. It's in the back."

"Of course it is," I said under my breath.

The tombstones we passed were all deteriorating badly. There had been a couple of nice, new ones in the front, but the further back we got, the more disintegrated they became until they were just white or brown chunks of rock sticking out of the ground.

Except in the very back. In the very back was a crypt. Not just a one person, "I'm going to be better than the rest of you even after death" type of crypt, but a "I bet there are catacombs leading to Rome" sort of crypt. The kind you see in horror movies with vampires using them as day homes.

I stopped. "Screw this. I'm not going in there."

Dee stopped and looked at me. "It's behind the crypt. God you're such a wuss."

He started walking again.

Reluctantly, I continued following him until we were behind the crypt. I immediately saw his "zine."

"What are those?" I asked, getting ready to swing my hatchet.

"It's my egg zine."

I looked at his eggs, three of them each the size of large poodle and the coppery color of a new penny. The hair on my arms was standing on end.

"First off, what kind of eggs are those? And secondly, how is this a zine?" I twitched mentally as I noticed how quickly Dee's new word had become part of my vocabulary. "Three eggs from the same thing don't make a collection."

"There's more than one, so it's a zine," he said matter-of-factly.

I sighed and shook my head, knowing that this wasn't a fight I could win. So I went back to the more important issue. "What are they?"

A faint smile played across his face. "Go touch one."

Abandoning my better judgment, I walked up to the eggs and reached out to one. As I did so, the hair on my head started standing up. My hand got within an inch of the egg before a bright, blue spark arced out and shocked me.

"Son of a whore!" I shouted as I jumped back, shaking my hand to get some feeling back into it.

Dee laughed. "Great, aren't they?"

I looked at my hatchet pointedly, and then looked at him.

"They're thunderbird eggs," he said quickly.

"Cars don't lay eggs," I said, still shaking my hand.

"Not the car, the bird it's named after. The one in Native American mythology."

I was going to say something sarcastic to him about believing myths, but the numbness that was slowly ebbing out of my hand convinced me otherwise. "Okay, aside from the lightning bolt that just paralyzed my hand, how do you know that's what they are? I mean, why would a big, mythological bird lay its eggs in a cemetery in west Michigan?"

"Well, I come out here sometimes to sit and think."

I stared at him.

"Really! It's a great place. There's no cars, no pollution, nothing. It's pretty relaxing. And pretty safe. I think that's why their mamma laid them here.

"Anyway, you remember the big thunderstorm we had a few weeks ago?"

I nodded.

"Well, I found them here after that. Then I touched one of them and got zapped. A little on-line research," he made typing motions with his fingers, "and I found out about thunderbirds."

"Refresh my memory. I know they make thunder and lightning, but that's about it."

Dee shrugged. "Not much else. They're huge, condor looking things that fight evil spirits and stuff. Some myths out west say they eat whales."

I looked at the eggs. They weren't whale-eating bird big, but they were still bigger than any eggs I'd ever seen. "Have some whale meat handy for when they hatch, do you?"

Dee shook his head. "Nope. I don't think I need any, either. I didn't see anything about baby thunderbirds, so I'm hoping that they just hatch all grown up."

"And you're just watching over them until then?" I said, remembering Dee's highly questionable past. "You're kind of an evil spirit yourself. What makes you think they won't try to eat you?"

"Cause they don't eat people," he said. Then, with a lot less certainty in his voice than I was comfortable with, "At least, I don't think they do."

"What makes you think that electric condors the size of ponies—"

"Horses," he interrupted.

My eyes got big. "Horses? Even better. Why won't they eat you? You're pretty snack size for them."

Dee shrugged. "I don't know. I just don't think they will. They're supposed to be good, and I don't think eating people is a good thing."

I exhaled loudly and rubbed my temples. "Yeah, but maybe they do."

"Why are you being such an ass about this?" Dee shouted, causing birds to fly out of some nearby trees. "I thought you'd get a kick out of this."

"It's not that I don't think this is cool," I said reasonably. I do. It's like finding Bigfoot in your hedges. But, like I said, they're electric condors the size of horses. Forgive me if I'm a bit leery."

Dee seemed to relax some. "Oh. No sweat. To tell the truth, I was scared as hell after the first time I got zapped. Just about peed my pants."

I put a hand up. "Way more than I needed to know. But I'm glad you've still got a little common sense in there."

I walked around the eggs, thinking about them.

"When do you think they'll hatch?" I asked Dee after my brief inspection.

"I don't know. I'm not a bird scientist, a what do you call them?"

"Crap," I said. I thought about it, snapping my fingers as if trying to wake up the memory. "Oh, an ornithologist."

"Yeah, one of those. I found out it takes condors about two months to hatch, so I'm guessing a little longer. Maybe two and a half or three."

"What are you going to do when they hatch?"

"Beats me. Probably just watch 'em fly off if they come out full grown."

"And if baby thunderbirds are like baby pigeons? You know, they have to exist, even if nobody ever sees them?"

Dee scratched his head. "I really haven't thought about it yet."

"It's a lot of responsibility being a daddy," I said with enough sarcasm to choke a pony. "I hope you're up to it."

"Yeah, well, if I'm the daddy, then you're the mommy."

"You couldn't pay me enough to watch them," I said flatly.

"You've got to," he pleaded. "I can't do it alone. I had a cactus once, and it died. If you don't help, Larry, Moe, and Curly will be joining it."

"You named them after the three stooges? Isn't that kind of cliché?"

"It was either that or John, Paul, and George."

"And you couldn't do that because one might be a girl, right?" I supplied, knowing how Dee thinks.

He nodded. "Right."

I sighed. "Either way, I'm not watching a bunch—"

"Zine," he interrupted.

"Whatever—of baby, whale-eating, electric condors."

I started walking back to the truck.

"Come on," he whined.

"No."

"Please. You'd be helping save an endangered species."

"They're not endangered, they're mythical."

"See! That's even worse!"

"No, I said."

He eventually wheedled me into helping him after a week of whining.

\*\*\*

Everything went well until about two months after Dee showed me his egg zine. That was when the giant snake tried to eat us.

Dee and I had just gotten to the cemetery when we saw a snake the size of a maple tree crawling its way towards the eggs. It was a deep black in color, making it look like it would have been more at home at night, or the bottom of the ocean or something. I couldn't see its head from where we were, but something deep down told me it would be pretty hideous.

"Shit," Dee swore quietly. "A horned snake."

I looked at him. "A what?"

"Horned snake. It's what thunderbirds fight. It must've crawled out of the river. I think it's what killed the momma."

"I don't remember you saying we'd have to fight giant snakes, Dee," I said angrily. "I'm pretty sure that would have stuck in my head."

"I didn't really think they were real."

"Says the guy with the thunderbird egg zine," I mumbled.

"Relax. I've got a gun in the truck." He reached behind the seat and pulled out a shotgun.

"How's that going to do anything other than piss it off?"

"You have a better idea?"

"Yeah. Leave."

Dee got out of his truck. "You can, but I've gotta protect my zine."

"You run away from football players. What makes you think you won't turn around and haul ass back here once that thing sees you?"

But he wasn't listening. He'd already started to creep up behind the horned snake, the tail of which was only about ten feet from the front of the truck.

Swearing under my breath the whole time, I got out and put on the gauntlet-like rubber gloves we'd both started wearing since working with the eggs. I figured that maybe I could sneak up and get away with one of the eggs while it was busy eating the other two, or Dee. Whichever.

As I crept alongside the horned snake, I got a chance to look at it more closely. Aside from its size, the blackness of its skin kept bothering me. Every time I looked at it, I didn't see any shine, or scales, or anything snake-like about it. It was obsidian, soul-sucking black that let not one bit of light come back out of it. And at the same time, it gave me the urge to go up and touch it, just to see how smooth it was, how soft. Then, in the back of my head, some survival instinct that I didn't know people still had, added, "How cold." And I knew it to be true. Nothing in nature could be that black and be safe for anything living.

I shook myself out of whatever reverie I had been in just in time to pull my hand back.

I heard a shotgun blast, and Dee yell, "Take that you biotch!"

The horned snake shuddered and roared. It pulled its head from behind the crypt and reared up to see what had just struck it. The horns were an appropriate part of the name, but the head was nothing like a snake's. It more closely resembled an elongated human's face. The first thought that popped into my mind was the way werewolves looked in movies half-way between shapes, with that wolf's muzzle pulling its way out of their face. This one was like that, but hairless and black. And those two horns were sticking out of its head where the temples would be on a human head. Horns that curved back, and had jagged serrations on the top, perfect for slicing open things from below.

Dee fired again, grazing the thing's right cheek.

It struck, but apparently missed because Dee was laughing at it.

"That the best you can do? My grandma's dachshund is more vicious than you are."

I ran for the eggs, shucking and jiving my way away from its body as it moved in an attempt to strike Dee.

When I got to the eggs, I saw that they had been disturbed some, with one egg out of place, but otherwise okay. I picked up the egg as gently as one can pick up a giant egg, holding it away from my body some to prevent any unwanted electrolysis.

"Ah, crap," I said and quickly put it back down as it started to shake.

I stepped around the corner of the crypt, hopefully out of lightning bolt range.

Overhead, storm clouds were swirling into existence in the formerly clear sky like black dye added to a whirlpool, getting ready to dump enough lightning on us to power Kalamazoo for a day, if the rumblings were any indication.

Dee came running around the other corner, out of breath but all right. He tossed down the shot gun. "No more bullets."

"Did you actually hurt it, Elmer, or just piss it off?"

"I'm not one of those snake scientists," he said in between breaths. "How should I know?"

"Herpetologist," I said absently. "Where's it at?"

Electricity arced out from where the eggs were. The horned snake, looking more pissed off than anything I've ever seen, appeared on our other side. It was about to strike, but then noticed the electricity.

Three bolts of lightning struck, I assumed, the eggs in quick succession, blinding and deafening Dee and me for a moment and sending us sprawling to the ground. When I was finally able to see again, the horned snake had disappeared.

I got up and went to look out at the graveyard. It was there, fighting three, full-grown thunderbirds, and not doing a very good job of it. Its body was pretty ripped up with claw marks that were bleeding dark red blood profusely from many cuts. It seemed to be trying to get back to the river, but the thunderbirds were having none of that. Every time it moved in that direction, two of them would dive at it, while the third grabbed it by the tail and pulled.

"Wow," Dee said from beside me. "Told you they came out grown up."

"Lucky for us."

The horned snake was now just striking out wildly wherever it could. It landed a lucky shot on one of the birds with its horns, slicing it just above the left leg. The bird cried out and thunder echoed back from the sky.

"That bastard hurt Curly!" Dee said angrily.

"How do you know it's Curly?" I asked.

"He just looks like a Curly."

"I'll take your word for it."

The wound incensed the other thunderbirds, who started attacking the snake in earnest, pecking and clawing whenever there was an opening. It was over quickly after that. It struck out half-heartedly a few more times, then the horned snake flopped to the ground, twitched a couple of times, and was still.

"All right!" Dee shouted. "Way to go, guys!" He started walking out to them.

The thunderbirds landed and started picking at the horned snake, tearing off giant chunks of meat.

I grabbed Dee's shoulder. How about we wait until they're done eating?"

Dee looked at how ravenously they were eating. "Sure. It's their first meal, so they're probably pretty hungry."

Within ten minutes nothing was left of the horned snake but a little, green, wobbly piece of something. They'd even eaten the bones, breaking up the skull and gulping down the pieces.

Cautiously, Dee and I approached them.

Dee raised his right hand to head level and waved. "Hey, guys."

It started to rain, with flashes of lightning and booms of thunder sounding in the distance.

I looked up, and at each flash of lightning, an after-image of a bird was left.

"I think their family's here to pick them up," I told Dee and pointed to the sky.

He looked up. "Cool."

The three thunderbirds shrieked in unison. The shriek trailed out into a loud crash of thunder. More booms sounded from the sky in response, along with more bolts of lightning.

Dee looked back at the thunderbirds. "Bye guys. You were the best zine I ever had."

The thunderbirds began flapping their enormous wings, sending out clouds of moist, hot air at us. Soon, they flew into the sky, disappearing into the clouds.

The rain washed away the green, wobbly piece, leaving nothing.

"You want to get the eggshells?" I asked Dee.

He shook his head. "Nah, they wouldn't go with my other zine."

We started walking toward his truck, both of us still looking to the sky occasionally. "You have another zine?"

"Wanna see it?"

"It doesn't involve big birds or snakes, does it?"

"Nope. Just these knights I found in a cave over by Paw Paw."

I sighed. "You can't have a zine of knights. They're people."

"So? They're all asleep. It's not like they know they're part of my zine. Do you want to go or not?"

I shrugged. I wasn't doing anything else that day. "Sure, why not?"

**My Fool**  
by  
**Jeff Nowak**

If I had enough money, I would buy me a fool. I would let him wander around the neighborhood whenever I didn't need him, but he would always have to be with me at breakfast and at dinner. There is a table waiting for him, just a little smaller than mine. He is allowed to eat as much as he pleases. After dinner, I have him brush his teeth, and then he goes to bed in my closet, which I have arranged with all the amenities to keep him comfortable - it is a very large and accommodating closet, complete with its own television and large enough for two people, but of course it will always be a closet, because that is what I call it. Upon waking, I head to the closet door, unlock it, and cheerfully order my fool to "get out of my closet, you old scamp! And have a hearty breakfast while you're at it!" but it would be understood that he could take his time in the bathroom to get ready for the day's activities. Within those boundaries, I recognize that there must be room for variation.

But the moment for my fool to shine - the moment I bought him for - are the parties I've always held. Before anyone knows what I own, I shoved my fool away into a real closet connected to my living room. He swore at me, and, being of the appropriate height, threatened to bite me in the crotch, but I rapped his knuckles with a ruler until he acquiesced. I arranged things, waiting for the guests to arrive, while bumps and giggles floated from the closet, where my fool was most likely urinating in the pockets of my sports jacket. "You'll get yours, old friend!" one of us said. Then the doorbell rang.

Michael and May came in. Michael wore a suit carried over from work, and May wore a skirt designed to show off her voluptuously flabby thighs. Robert followed, who always had the smartest things to say. May crossed and uncrossed her legs in enthusiasm as Michael drank, and Robert welcomed (with a quip) Joe and Mariam, who were devoutly interested both in each other and the newspapers. They made the party complete. "You make our party complete," Robert said.

"Did you hear about Russia? It's scary," Joe or Mariam said.

Michael drank. "Oh yes," May said. "What a world . . ."

"What do you think we should do?"

"Oh . . . what a world . . ."

"I think," Robert responded, "that it's not worth the thought. I have perfect faith that our politicians will manage to mess it up."

"Very true," I said, "very true."

"At work today," Michael interrupted, but with purpose. "I got to fire someone, a good kid, optimistic little brat."

"How was it?"

"It was fun." Michael drank.

This continued for an hour or so, and became noticeably dull. I decided then to take the whistle out of my pocket - I had demanded that my fool come with a whistle - and blew it as hard as I could. Startled by the noise, everyone turned to me, only to be taken by the greater surprise of my closet door smashing against the wall to reveal my fool, accompanied by the pungent smell of urine. Bells adorned his colorful cap, but instead of jingling his head, he stood quietly with his hands behind his back, waiting for us to settle down.

"Oh you have a fool!" Mariam said. "Where do they come from? How much do they cost? Do you treat him well? Does he do everything you say?"

"He's adorable!" Michael sputtered. Everyone agreed.

"I operate . . ."

"He talks!"

"Of course he talks. That's what they do. They're jesters."

"I operated . . ." We waited for his tirade.

"Does he throw pies?"

"Why would he throw pies?"

"He does much better things. Fools don't come cheap. It's a riot, you'll see."

"I operate . . ." We couldn't help but giggle, he was so tiny. Michael tried to give him his drink, but he kept on talking, gurgling through the scotch, and that made us laugh even more. "I've lived my whole life under the philosophy that gurglgurglgurglgurgl . . . excuse me, thank you. I have always prided myself on my politeness. I like not to be noticed and to do my job, because that is what I have promised to do, but I have sat in that closet for over an hour. I have been forced to listen to you speak. Now I have something to say."

"Uh-oh, NOW we're in for it." Michael guffawed. Apparently he had been through one of these before and had greatly enjoyed it. He threw a grape at my fool, which amazed me because I don't buy grapes.

"The man with the drink has volunteered to go first. I will not begrudge you your pleasure . . . I've seen your kind before. In a different era you would have belonged to three social clubs, and in each meeting you would've had your drinks, had your meal, had your drinks, and preached about the dangers of inefficiency and communism, which, you like to joke, amount to the same thing."

"Oh, he's got my number!" Michael laughed even harder than before and managed, with a massive effort, to counter with a fart.

"As of right now, however, I don't know what you are. You're anachronistic - a workaholic who would've taken a mistress but who's too fat to be able to come home to anything but his supportive, cheating wife. You measure your life in mortgage payments, and when you've paid it all off, when you've retired and discovered that you can't remember what it was you had wanted to do in the first place, you'll tell your kids (assuming that they're

yours) that you're done with this rat race. And you'll fall asleep - if there's a way to be both bloated and shrunken, you'll find it - crumpled in the corner of an Arizona cage. I can smell your future carcass from here."

"HOOORAAAAY! You got yourself a good one, Ray, a smart little prick."

"As for your wife . . ."

"Now do my wife, you'll love this honey."

"You were young once, and you were able to wear that skirt once. Whenever a reporter came into a bar looking to do a story on the sexual habits of college students, you were always the first one, even when you were 27 and 8 years out of college you offered yourself up and talked provocatively about how men don't know how to please a woman, you know what I mean."

"That's such a cute voice!"

"I wish he'd say more big words, he sounds like a squirrel giving a commencement address."

"You had no dreams. You might've been a nihilist - "

"Hee-hee-hee."

" - but at least nihilists believe in their nothing. You just don't believe. Whenever someone asked you your opinion on anything, you smiled, flipped your hair back, and muttered something about how awful or wonderful it was, and when they asked you (sometimes seriously) what it was that you wanted to do, you said, quite proud of yourself, 'All you devoted people scare me. Why should I want to DO anything?' And one time you answered - and this was the proudest moment of your life - 'I want to do THIS, just this, forever and ever.' And this is exactly what you are doing, so that everyone in this room has had to see at least once tonight that ugly, floppy thing between your legs."

We had tried to keep quiet enough to listen to all his fun, but the second he said "floppy thing" we fell all over each other. If he had come right out and said it, I suppose the speech would've worked just as well, but since he tried so hard to stay technically polite by using euphemisms, we couldn't help but laugh at his politeness.

"And you..."

"I think it's talking to me," Robert said.

"The one lording it over everyone with your smart comments and impeccable grammar... you had wanted to be big... you would've settled on being a nameless tycoon if you'd known anything but business, but you wanted to be an actor, a director, a celebrity, an author, a renowned professor who knows everything about that one fascinating topic... anything as long as you could have had, once in your life, your very own opportunity on a talk show, in front of a crowd, so you could tell them off with a bottle in one hand and your genius in the other. But you couldn't afford a camera, and you decided against acting when you realized you would eventually have to touch someone. You sent manuscripts to magazines, but you could never find a way to get paid for it. The colleges told you that you couldn't get

anywhere until you learned how to stick to a thesis. The most you could do with a canvas was take a dump on it, and that only takes you so far. You're ashamed that you can't be anywhere as big as you want to be, but you make up for it by making fools out of fools at parties... I don't believe you've ever told anyone in this room what your job really is.

"And you two, the two I can't quite tell apart: you two met in a coffee shop where you both discovered that you were both buying coffee made from beans cultivated by thoroughly unexploited Guatemalans. You could be librarians or bank tellers, but I'm sure that you work hard at what you do, because you can't stand to have a second go by without having done something or learned something of little or no consequence. When you breathe, you test the air for factoids you can tell your friends, and at night, you climb on top of each other to compare notes. The starving are anecdotes to you, at most something to protest. The worst part is, you know that's the best you can do, and you don't care."

Wiping the tears from our eyes, a few of us were doubled up on the floor with laughter, while the rest leaned back in our chairs and gurgled on our own amusement. My fool turned back to me as we waited in expectation.

"And my master, who has arranged this event, is little more than a lonely sap who has no family and too much disposable income, so he spends his money on toys which he think amount to real relationships. I've heard him grab himself out of loneliness and fear at all hours of the day. He might've made a decent politician, but he's neither charming nor attractive enough to convince any man, woman, or corporation to give him money. And thank God for that. If he had the money or the power, this place would be six stories tall and overflowing with abducted little boys, because he has nothing to do but dinner parties and no one to talk to but guests, and he's convinced that somewhere in the world there's a lost childhood, and if he could just find it somebody would talk to him and mean it, because everyone feels for children, especially the lonely ones."

At that, he began an extended diatribe against our group as a whole, claiming that we talk too much because we have nothing to say, that we are human only in name and in body, and that whatever was left of our souls has already been spent in department stores. It was difficult to hear what he said through all the cheers and the giggles, but he ended with, "You are wastes unto yourselves and you mean nothing to me." He made a sharp gesture of disgust with his arm and his body, which caused his bells to jingle, and then we lost control. We tittered and cackled as we tackled him to the floor, jamming food down his throat out of pure glee. Someone brought a blanket from my bedroom, and we grabbed the ends, threw him on the stretched blanket, and tossed him up and down while yelling, "Huzzah!" at the tops of our voices. He hit the ceiling a number of times, and we stopped once he missed the blanket and landed on the floor, and our energy was spent by then. "You have a wonderful fool," they all said as they left. "How do you keep him under control?"

"It's easy. I just threaten to feed him to the hobo I keep chained in the backyard."

The evening is over. I pat my fool on the head, who, though battered and bruised, remains proud. I express to him my thanks and reiterate what a pleasurable and enlightening experience was had by all. "Because you see," I intone, quoting an old saying, "a good fool can remind everyone of how big a joke they really are."

"Quite, but I believe it's the other way around."

I wouldn't quibble, and in payment for his services, I'd give my fool a tiny hallucinogen to match his tiny frame. He, in turn, would caper about his closet for the duration of the night. In this way, I assume, we would live a happy and painless existence until the end of our well-worn lives.

**An Overdue Proposal**  
by  
**Paul B. Hertneky**

Permit me to call for an end to how we handle blowjobs, linguistically, that is. Both halves of this compound word are misleading. "Blow," as we all know is inaccurate; what teenager has not found it confusing? And "job" carries too narrow a connotation. Its vulgarity offends, and for many, it is not a job. For others, it is a job, and can be a well-paying or a thankless one. But it is not always a job and many adults find a great deal of pleasure in it. Granted, such a job could be viewed as the kind of job done on another, like a loanshark does on deadbeat. But a job's a job, and most people hate their jobs. So why call it that? Just one of the odd characteristics of these jobs is that, most people for whom the jobs have been done have never done the jobs themselves. So, it is only out of ignorance and unfairness that we refer to them as such.

But the real inconsistency with these jobs is that they are considered by men as a complete sexual encounter, whereas equivalent activity, performed primarily for women, bears a Latin name that sounds more like an Irish railroad and is seldom discussed as the single act in a sexual interlude. Although jobs are often one-act plays for men, opening the curtain on a woman's stage only introduces a drama destined for several set changes. In addition to a revision that serves accuracy and fairness, a semantic change could spawn a boom in this form of eros. Perhaps more jobs are going on in the mainstream of society than I know. But even if only a few enjoy doing their jobs, I would argue that they were cut out for the work, born to the job, or learned the job and came to love it.

Still, for those averse to additional work, referring to these pleasures as jobs retards, if you will, job creation and a growth in jobs. If we all want more, it's time we found a new word, a word that includes an act done by women and men for women and men, a unisex word. Although I have dreaded this final stage of my proposal, calling for the abolition of a word carries the responsibility to suggest replacements. As much as I would like to throw the selection process open to all comers, I fear that I may not have many chances to spark this discussion and I don't wish to leave the matter hanging. Of the alternatives I have been offered to date, I will put a few terms before you, all of which will be an improvement.

For its folksy Midwestern charm and onomatopoeic qualities, "humdinger" ranks high. If I had to decide now, and surely I do, I will begin tossing it around, along with a bit of military jargon for a tactic performed by both men and women: "carpet-bombing," which makes me want to laugh, a quality I think the new word should possess. I am equally tickled by orfing, honeytuning, pearl diving, eating the low-cal lunch, eating the fruit cup, giving a perm, talking on the groan-a-phone, diving at the Y, lip-slinking, going round the world, cleaning up the kitchen, gobbling, talking to the canoe driver, and giving a g.o.g. (an acronym for "gesture of generosity"). Think about them and use them freely.

**Porno For The Lord**  
by  
**Rob Rosen**

*Dolores del Dunning and her triple D's*, the sign glowed. Dolores was thrilled to finally see her name in lights. Granted, a few of those lights were flickering and the sign hung over a so-so strip club that took up most of the nearly deserted alleyway; still, she was the headliner. The star. The performer they were all paying to see. And for that reason, she glowed even brighter than the sign that hung overhead.

"If they could see me now," she said as she grandly entered the club.

Then again, they'd have no idea who Dolores del Dunning was. Neither her name nor her physical attributes even remotely resembled the girl who left her hometown in Georgia nearly five years earlier. Shirley Keller had been a mousy brunette. Average looking at best. And yet, deep down inside, there was a star just waiting to emerge. Sure, she knew it would be tough. Sure, she knew she'd have to make some changes to herself. And sure, she knew there'd be a few concessions that would have to be made along the way. But in the end, she also knew that it would be worth all the sacrifices.

Unfortunately, Los Angeles wasn't anything Shirley had expected. It was grimy. It was smoggy. It was way too crowded and loud. And, more significantly, it was full of women just like herself, all with a dream and a desire to make it in the big city. So after six months of endless cattle calls and a few auditions that went nowhere, Shirley emerged not as a star, but as a cocktail waitress at a sleazy downtown bar. It paid the bills, but not much else. It was degrading and it was tiresome. And yet Shirley held on to her dreams, however postponed they might have become.

She worked at the club for about a year and even managed to save up a little money. That's when she found she had a choice to make. She could move back home to Georgia, find a husband, have some kids, and settle down; or she could use the money to buy some boobs. Boredom or boobs, as she liked to put it.

Naturally, she chose the latter. Boobs, it seemed, were all the rage in Hollywood. And she knew it would help, monetarily speaking. Tipping, she'd seen time and time again, was proportionately related to breast size. The bigger the tits, the bigger the tips. So she went full hog. Triple D's. They cost her every last penny she had, but they were something to behold.

Then she dyed her hair platinum blonde, joined a gym, and, before she knew it, she had a new job at one the swankiest clubs on the strip. The money started rolling in. And though Shirley was happier than she'd been in along while, she still wasn't fulfilled. Her dream, it seemed, was languishing on the vine. Busty, blonde waitresses were a dime a dozen in LaLa Land. Stardom skyrocketed you into a whole other realm. And that's where Shirley longed to be.

*Still, she was thrown for a loop when a casting director told her she simply didn't have the talent and that she should try her luck in porn. There, apparently, you didn't need any other skills except for what nature gave you. Nature or a good plastic surgeon, as was the case.*

*Shirley told the director in no uncertain terms what he could do with his advice, and then she stormed out of his office.*

“What does he know, anyway,” she told herself as she settled into her car. Then again, what did she know? She’d been in Hollywood for well over a year and hadn’t had one acting gig. Not even a bite. And porn was acting, right? Maybe, she figured, the guy had a point. After all, she now had the body and the looks for it. And she certainly had the jugs. Plus, she had heard that the money and the hours were great. So, sitting there in the car that day as she pondered her options, Dolores del Dunning was born and Shirley Keller was no more.

Within six months she starred in five movies, the third of which got her name in bold letters on the video box. She was, if not a star, than at least an actress. For it did take quite a bit of acting to do what she had to do in order to make it in the industry. The men, after all, weren’t exactly lookers. There were no Brad Pitts doing porn, she found. Though there were a lot of Adam Sandler. She did like the people she met, though. Most were actors and actresses like herself who couldn’t find work in legitimate movies. And there was a certain comradeship amongst her peers. They were in the same boat. Sex, after all, did make them closer than your average coworkers. And yes, as she had heard, the money was terrific, especially for the hours she had to put into it. She made even more doing personal appearances. That she liked best. She loved being ogled at. Loved signing her autograph. Loved the elation she felt when someone recognized her.

And that’s how she found herself that fateful day as she sauntered into the club that broadcast her name in lights: happy as a clam to be doing something that brought others as well as herself so much joy. She was a star, even if only in certain circles, and she was ready to perform for her fans.

At least that’s what she had planned. She didn’t, unfortunately, get that far. Just as she was making her way on stage, through the dense crowd of admiring men, someone spilled their drink on the floor, and her shiny, black stilettos fell out from under her. She went down like a sack of bricks. Her head smacked hard against the back of a chair and she was out cold.

Though she wasn’t completely unconscious. She was, if anything, acutely aware of her being. Her soul, if you will. And this was neither a scary nor unpleasant feeling. It felt like she was floating on air. Then, in the distance of her vision, for she could see the space around her, came a bright, white light. It grew and grew until it completely engulfed her, bathing her in its warmth. And from this light came a voice that permeated the very fiber of her being. It said, succinctly and with a great roaring boom, “Dolores, use your talents in my name.” And that was all that was said. A moment later Dolores batted her eyelids and found herself surrounded by the club’s employees and patrons.

She knew in an instant what had happened. She had slipped. She had been knocked out. God had spoken to her. She was as certain of the last thing as she was of the first two. Felt it down to her very bones. But God called her Dolores, not Shirley. What could that mean? There was no time to think of an answer, however. Within seconds an ambulance arrived and she was carried out on a stretcher, much to her embarrassment. The management had insisted. If she was hurt, they were liable. But, in truth, Dolores felt fine. Radiant, even. At peace.

As she suspected, they found nothing wrong with her at the hospital and she was released. She told no one about her encounter with God. They would have probably locked her up for safekeeping. So she kept it to herself. Though she knew she had to do something. When

God speaks to you, you listen. And, more importantly, you act. But therein laid the problem. Just what was she supposed to do? Her résumé didn't exactly shine. Washed out cocktail waitresses and budding porn stars weren't exactly heralded as appropriate messengers for the Lord, Mary Magdalene perhaps being the exception.

But then again, the Lord did tell her to use her talents. And what talents did she have if not as an actress? And where else could she act except in pornos? A conundrum if ever there was one. After all, you couldn't exactly preach the teachings of the Lord with your legs spread from East to West. Who would listen? And who pay to watch such a thing? Of course, the alternative was to ignore the word of God, so Dolores would just have to think of something.

It turned out she didn't have long to wait. She got her first idea on the set of her very next picture. In it, she played a door-to-door saleswoman, like an Avon lady who gave really great head, and right away she knew she had a way to act on the Lord's command. Porn flicks aren't based on strict dialogues like real movies. Generally, the actors are given premises and ideas for dialogue, but there's a whole lot of ad-libbing going on once the cameras start rolling. So Dolores pulled the director over to the side and suggested that it would be more controversial to make her a door-to-door minister that went around asking for charitable donations. That kind of thing had never been done before, she persuaded. It would be the first of its kind and they would be mavericks.

"Fine. Whatever. Just shake the jugs a lot," the director said with a shrug and then walked away.

Dolores was tickled pink. And when the Director yelled, "Shoot", she rang the doorbell and preached to the toweled man that answered. Oh sure, there was still all the sex and everything that quickly ensued, but this time when she shouted, "Oh God", in the throws of passion, she really meant it.

*Aahs For The Poor* was released later that summer and was an instant success. No one had ever thrown sex and religion into a porn movie like that before. It was salacious. It was controversial. And it was hot. Sunday school had never been so enthralling.

The press came knocking on her door almost immediately. The director, who was not the brightest bulb on the tree, failed to realize the ingenuity of the idea and gave Dolores all the credit. Religion was now newsworthy, what with the recent election and the rise of the evangelical Christians to power, not to mention a certain Mel Gibson movie. And Dolores was now thrust, for lack of a better word, into the forefront of a cultural revolution. She was, of course, pleasantly surprised at all the attention she now garnered.

"Miss Dunning, how did you come up with the idea for *Aahs For The Poor*?" the first reporter shouted from her front doorstep one morning when she was on her way to a shoot.

Miss Dunning, are you a Catholic?" A second one shouted.

"Miss Dunning, do your parents know what you do for a living?" A third asked.

Dolores was, for an instant, thrown back by the barrage, but quickly regained her composure and answered the questions with honesty.

"The Lord," she said, "works in mysterious ways. And, occasionally, through even more mysterious messengers. And no, I'm not a Catholic. Though I do believe in God and his teachings. I believe in preaching his love by giving love. And yes, my parents know what I do for a living and they have always been proud of their daughter." Dolores smiled warmly for the cameras that now amassed on her lawn. Media attention was even better than sex. Every cell in her body was practically pulsating with joy.

She then waved for the cameras and drove to work. She'd already written the premise for her next movie, at the request of the producers. This one was entitled *Jesus Is Coming*. Jesus, though, was pronounced "Hay-Seuss", and was played by a well-endowed Latino. In it, the two preached tolerance and then copulated in a homeless shelter, a '76 Chevy Impala, and a deserted warehouse, where they then gave a sermon to the homeless who were all, not too surprisingly, somewhat on the sexy side and in different states of undress. After all, it was still a porn movie, albeit one with a heavenly message.

It also sold more copies than any movie of its kind in the last decade. The reaction by the press, and the subsequent uproar by the Catholic Church, sent copies flying off the shelves; and sent Dolores into the stratosphere of super-stardom.

She quickly became a media darling, appearing on entertainment news shows and magazines all across the country. She preached love. She preached tolerance. And she preached the message of the Lord. Love thy neighbor had never had so much veiled significance before. And in her next film, *Point The Finger*, love thyself took on a whole new meaning.

Of course, it wasn't long before Hollywood finally came calling. Porn star or not, Dolores was now a celebrity. And a commodity. Her image appeared everywhere. Even a few churches, those with less conservative viewpoints, invited her to sermonize. The people turned out in droves to catch a glimpse of her. To perhaps touch her. And, most importantly, to listen to her. For she did speak, from the heart, the message of the Lord. So it wasn't too surprising that the movie moguls now wanted a piece of her. But is that what Dolores wanted?

See, it turned out that Dolores really enjoyed the mission God gave her. The smiles she triggered on the faces of her admirers, both in person and, she assumed, behind closed doors, was exactly the reaction she had always wanted as an actress. Only now, as an envoy of the Lord, she was also touching people on a profoundly deeper level. Could Hollywood offer such similar satisfaction?

So Dolores held a press conference, and hundreds of reporters, both national and international, turned out. All the networks were there. There were also a few thousand fans. By then, that's the kind of response Dolores incurred.

She appeared in an all white gown, cut low so that her moneymakers shared the spotlight with her. The press had called them her apostles and named them, appropriately, Lefty and Righty. She smiled coyly for the cameras and began her speech. This one she had memorized, though by then she was a pretty experienced ad-libber.

"My friends, members of the distinguished press, and people of all religions, I welcome you to this press conference. I am honored and blessed by your outpouring of love." The crowd applauded appreciatively and Dolores nodded and flashed her pearly whites. She continued, "Now, as many of you no doubt have been reading lately, Hollywood has been knocking on my door asking me to make so-called legitimate movies." A few boos went out through the

crowd. "Yes," Dolores said, with a certain self-satisfaction, "I couldn't agree with you more. Considering the sales of my last few movies, I'd say I was already making legitimate movies." The crowd erupted in applause. Dolores waited for them to simmer down. "Still, that is not the reason for this conference. I leave the Hollywood bashing to the respected journalists seated here today. No, the reason for this little get-together is to announce my retirement."

The crowd jumped to their feet and a storm of flashbulbs and shouts erupted from the dense crowd. Dolores just sat quietly in her seat and smiled down at the throng. She felt truly serene at that moment. The joy of finally reaching the heights she so longed to reach, mixed with the knowledge she was about to impart, filled her with a profound inner peace. So when the noise in the auditorium at last subsided, she was ready to make her announcement.

"As you all know by now, I have endeavored to preach the ministry of the Lord in my own special way. And that, I must say, has been profoundly enriching and enjoyable, hopefully for not only myself." Again the crowd whistled and cheered appreciatively. "But even I know that I'm reaching just a mere fraction of my potential audience. And what will happen to my videos and my message when you get tired of watching them?"

On cue, two men that had been standing behind her reached for the sheet that had been covering the wall and each gave a hard yank downwards. A picture of Dolores with her hands held skyward was printed on the large poster that was now visible for all to see. In it, Dolores smiled radiantly and was surrounded by a halo of light, like the one she'd seen that day back in the club. And across the top of the poster it was printed in bold letters, *The Gospel According To Dolores*.

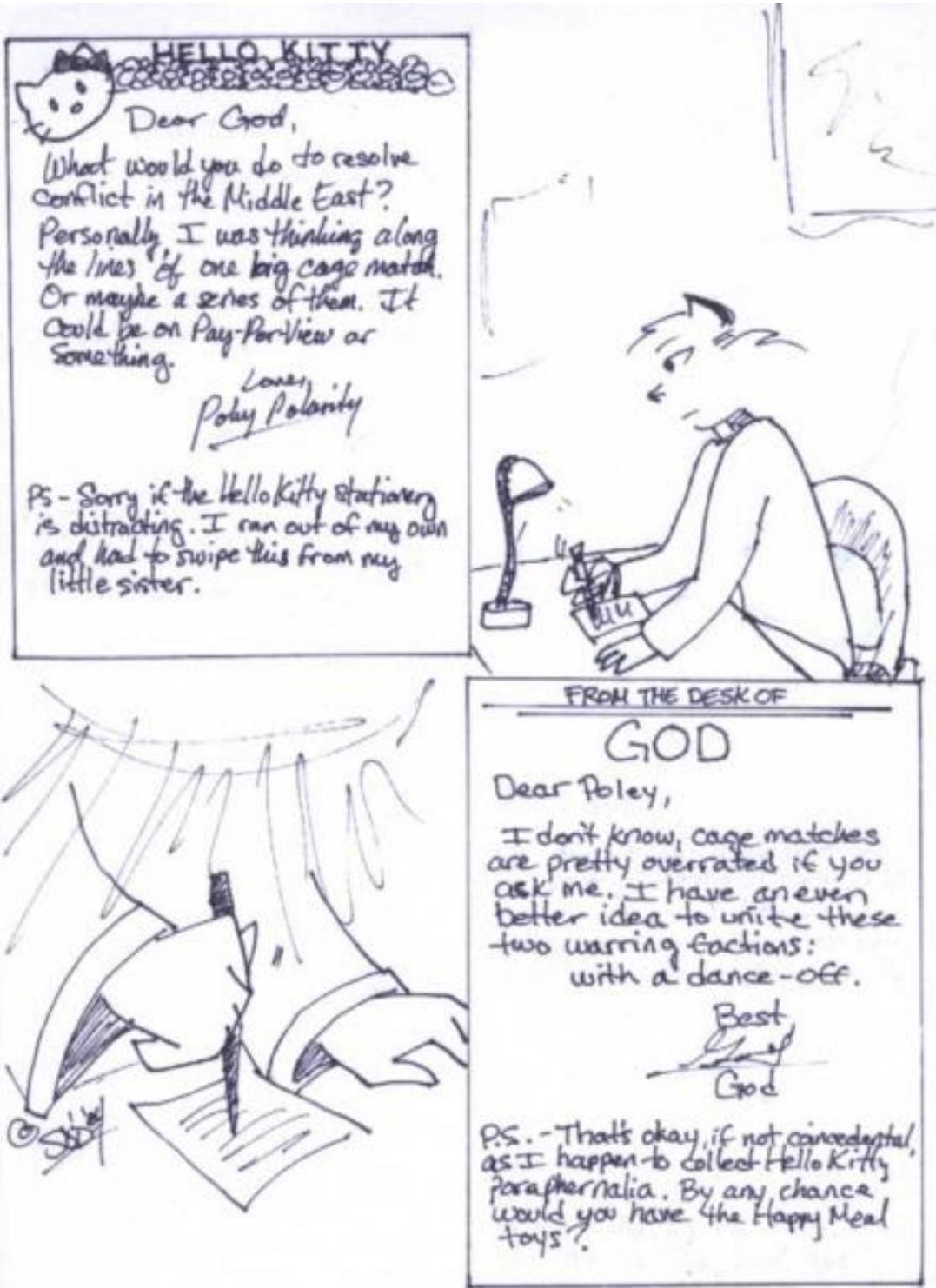
"My friends, this room you sit in today will be, starting this very Sunday, the site of my new church. I invite you all to attend. Oh, and before I forget," she said, with a sly smirk, "clothing is optional."

Again the crowd erupted, but Dolores simply smiled, waved, and walked offstage. And, as promised, that very Sunday her first service was given. The crowds filled the auditorium and spilled out clear around the block. Dolores was wise enough to install outdoor speakers so all could hear the message of love that she preached. And for all those waiting and listening outside, a warm glow was cast down from the sign that hung above the doors to the building - *Dolores del Dunning and her triple D's: Devotion, Devoutness, and Decency. All are Welcome*. And truly, all were.

**Love From, Of Course, Crispy**  
by  
Ricky Garni



**Penpals With God, Episode 1**  
by  
Stephanie O'Donnell



## Contributor Biographies

**Arlene Ang** has been abducted by aliens since 1934. She's being treated well for a woman who likes to wear plastic fangs to bed. Her poems are tolerated and sometimes used as a mustard substitute. She is sometimes beamed down at <http://arleneang.blogspot.com> to communicate good will and the latest in emoticon technology.

**Haratron's Kidnapper** is a menace to society.

**Crispin Weatherall** joined the League of Extraordinary Gentleman pretending to be Thomas Hardy's Mayor of Casterbridge. His super power was to get wasted at the fair and sell his wife and daughter to whatever sailor caught his eye. It was a skill he could only ever perform once.

When not entertaining the elderly with her bellydancing, **Anna Psitos** dreams of one day touring the world with a musical group, possibly as a roadie. If this fails, she will join the circus and train the elephants.

**Bernie Poliquin** once claimed to be the reincarnation of William Shakespeare, until Shakespeare's ghost caught up with him and put a stop to that silliness once and for all.

**Jason Arbogast** currently lives in Charlotte, NC; Toledo, OH; Kalamazoo, MI; and the all coffee shops in between. Rumors of him being a teacher are unconfirmed, as he only speaks to children in Etruscan. He did go to Western Michigan University, and is looking to go to grad school in the fall for an MA in creative writing.

**Jeff Nowak** shelves children's books at a library on the north side of Chicago. When he's not handling Juvenile Fiction, he's organizing Easy Reading, which is a little easier than Juvenile Fiction, and when he's not doing that, he's doing the Readers, which are a little easier than Easy Reading. He likes his books as he likes his women: neatly categorized and arranged on a shelf.

Renowned psychics and channelers, including Shirley MacLaine, have certified that **Paul B. Hertneky** is the reincarnation of Michel de Montaigne. He demurs, citing no facility for French and a love of women, but nevertheless wears powdered wigs and argues constantly with himself. His modern essays are available upon request at [phertneky@aol.com](mailto:phertneky@aol.com).

**Rob Rosen** lives, loves, and works in San Francisco. His first novel, "Sparkle," was published in 2001 to critical acclaim. His short stories appear regularly on more than forty literary sites worldwide, and have been published in the literary anthologies *Mentsh* (Alyson, 2004), *I Do/I Don't* (Suspect Thoughts Press, 2004), *Travel a Time Historic* (Cyber Pulp, 2005), *Short Attention Span Mysteries* (Kerlak Publishing, 2005), *Brotherhood* (Alyson, 2005), and *Modern Magic, Wizards, and Witches* (Kerlak Publishing, 2005). Rob was also the winner of the Muse Apprentice Guild's annual international Chapbook Competition and will have a collection of his short stories published in the spring of 2005. Feel free to visit him at his website [www.therobrosen.com](http://www.therobrosen.com) or email him at [robrosen@therobrosen.com](mailto:robrosen@therobrosen.com)

**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.