

◇ Defenestration ◇

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Two Poems
by
Bryan Thao Worra

The Big G.

We don't say his name aloud in serious poetry.
We close our eyes and say he doesn't exist.
I am a modern eastern Peter with a mouth of denials
While the cocks crow at the rising sun.

Right next to a certain master of Jeet Kune Do,
He stood like a giant torii gate
Between my heart and the American flag.

How many people were surprised, when my words
Moved in time with my lips.

Even today, they still believe my buildings
Can't stand the test of time, crumbling
At the first sign of trouble
Like a pasty French defense
Only a swarthy legion of strangers can vindicate.

But the old boy's got stamina-
He's neck and neck with James Bond,
Trampling the Police Academies and Shakespeare plays.

Now, why should I reject this reliable radioactive lug,
Just to be taken seriously by some stiff academe
With erectile dysfunction and a bad toupee?

And in learning to love the reptile,
Perhaps we can learn to love ourselves,
Atomic halitosis and all.

Secrets

Ok, untie me already.
I'll tell you:

The secret to good pad thai
is not the dollop of ketchup
like that white guy
wrote after one lousy
cooking course in Chiangmai

Nor is it anything
involving chi or feng shui,

so you can drop
the mandala and that wok
you bought on TV

from that bald British expat
who reminded you
of G. Gordon Liddy.

It's just the noodles
you use, nothing
more magic than that.

You ought to know: In Bangkok
it's simply an Asian Big Mac
and if you're paying more than
200 Baht you're getting ripped off.

I'd tell you the secret
to a great bowl of pho,
but I'd never get a meal in this city again.

As it is, I'm a dead man,
My life hung by
a bean thread noodle,
once word gets out.

White Trash Lament
by
Cindy Puzak

I live in a trailer park
Full of God-fearin' folks
And rottweilers.
And I don't know who's scarier--
Them dogs,
Them neighbors,
Or Jesus.

Three Poems
by
J.D. Nelson

reason for leaving?

rabbits with switchblades.

from the mailbag

Dear Solar Wolf,

My head is dead & full of stuffing or potatoes. Dig right in. I know that you'd rather have some rice crackers & hummus, but these brains is all I've got right now.

Congratulations on your new suit -- it's definitely you. Tap some toes, peel some hard boiled eggs, get comfortable & squirt water from your ears.

Did you leave your lunch in the lab again? Which chickens did you pick? I have all of my eggs on #3, the red hen. She's always been good to me & now I'm going to fry her up in motor oil & take a nap on this giant square of plastic. How splendid it is to be alive, yes?

What did you do with those broken bottles? We need the shards for a new sculpture in the back garden.

I'll drop you a line tomorrow morning. Until then, please straighten up a little & remember what I said about the flowers.

In Two,
Universal Mind

duplicate snowflakes

* *

Misguided Haikus
by
K.T. May

Haiku #1:

Tears drip down her dress
As she watches her husband
Dance in her stockings.

Haiku #2:

Peace, serenity,
After the cell phone user
At the movies dies.

Haiku #3:

Corn Flakes...why the choice
Of a chicken on the box?
An ingredient?

What The Freudians Need More Than Anything Else Is To Acquire One Or Two Poet-Minded Interpreters

**by
Karen Ashburner**

I wrote this poem in a surly fashion,
though not while drinking black coffee,
and not while sitting in a diner,
nor while conspiring with a handsome man
as to who among us might want to knife-fight
someone over the sullied honor of someone's sister.

There was one paper cut, three misspelled words,
and two regrets: that no handsome man has ever offered
to knife-fight someone over my sullied honor,
and that I have never used an exclamation point in a poem.

In the middle I received a call from an old lover,
and was thusly distracted for a good hour:
thirty minutes spent devoted to the talk, thirty minutes
then devoted to something private that shall henceforth
be referred to as "none of your business."

Also there were four or five pages that found themselves
crumpled into a ball and thrown to the floor,
mainly because a word found itself in the wrong place,
at the wrong time, but was then rearranged and put rightly.
These pages I shall call "practice."

Toward the end, my room began to get hot
and the dog who lives across the street started
barking and I lost my concentration so I lifted
the words "digestive apparatus" and "ductless glands"
from a medical dictionary and threw them in for good measure
because I thought they sounded neat.

After it was over I began to daydream about things
that had nothing whatever to do with this poem,
like diners, and black coffee, and the company
of a handsome man. Though I considered that maybe
a knife-fight was not the best diversionary scenario,
and might, in the end, do my handsome man harm.

So I changed the daydream to an emergency situation
in which my ankle or something was twisted
and my handsome man was a charismatic paramedic
who could recite passages from Emily Dickinson.
Later we ate ice cream from a plastic bowl
as we sat on a bench by the river and watched the
cargo ships pass by in a light summer fog,

and talked about the fact that "Dickinson"
was one of the words I had misspelled
just a few moments before.

Deborah Tavistock's Problem
by
Alex Keegan

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Allen Bath Centre, your premiere centre for Kraftmaid and Woodmode cabinets, Corian work-surfaces, and...

Um, is there a toilet?

Behind reception, Sir.

Ta.

... Corian work-surfaces, and...

Is there more than one?

Sorry, Madam?

Toilet?

Behind reception, madam, where the gentleman –

Yes, but is there more than one?

Madam?

Toilet. Is there more than one?

Why?

Well, I don't want to follow some big lump of a man into the lav, do I? Some ox who farts and has B.O. and probably shits half-way up the wall.

Errr...

Some utter bastard who has been fucking –

Er, ladies and gentlemen, if you'll just follow my colleague. I'll just take madam through.

Jesus, Deborah, what's Joe done this time?

He's screwing the au pair.

Well, of course he's screwing the au pair. That's what they're for.

This is a guy, Frank.

Joe is balling a guy?

He's Latvian. He's absolutely gorgeous, Frank. I'm devastated.

Devastated?

It was my turn, Frank. Joe said, get yerself some strapping wop, to help round the house, that's what he said, or some young stud from one of the new EC countries. Get yerself some twenty year old with pecs and a six-pack and a big dong. I doan mind. And you did?

Yeah, Rodrika, from Latvia, from Riga. But now Joe is –

Rogering Rodrika?

In one.

But I thought Joe was, you know, normal, like orientated the right way.

So did I. But this Roderika, he's, well Frank, he's sex on legs. I –

Oh, don't fucking CRY, Debs. I gotta business to run `ere.

Sorry.

Coffee?

Please.

So what am I supposed to do, Debs? I'm Joe's brother, not his bleeding mother. And why do you always pull the fucking excuse me where's the toilet stunt? Do you know how tight business is these days?

You never answered the phone. I texted you twenty-three times.

I was –

I know where you was. Marika, right?

Bosnia. Loverley girl.

Well, at least yer putting it in the correct hole. Press Button B and all that.

We try to please, Debs.

What am I gonna do, Frank?

The population of Latvia is two million, three hundred and six thousand, three hundred and six. Fifty-seven point seven per cent of them are Latvians, which means there's one million, three hundred and thirty thousand, seven hundred and thirty-eight Latvians, with an odd point five-six-two of a person to figure out. Now whether that means there's a dismembered publican from Rezekne or some very odd looking bloke in Valmiera, or there's some mixed-race stuff going on, I don't really know, but let me tell you, Deborah, Latvian blokes, they peg out awful early. They outnumber the girls when they pop into this world, but fuck me they fall like flies thereafter. By the time they get to sixty-five the women out-number them two to one.

And how is that going to help me?

Oh, I doan know, but it's interesting innit?

Do I have to phone Doris?

Leave Doris out of this, Debs. I said I'll help you out. I just can't figure how.

I have needs Frank. Insatiable needs.

I've heard.

So think of something.

Well, can't you send the Riga Rigger packing? Just ring the agency and say he's not up to scratch?

He's gorgeous, Frank.

So what he's bloody gorgeous. He's a shirt-lifter intee? What good's he to you?

He's a nice boy.

He's a nice boy?

He's a nice boy.

Excuse me, Mrs. bloody Tavistock, but this nice "boy" is fucking your old man.

Well he has needs.

But he's -

And he cleans brilliantly, sings like an angel, cooks. And he never complains.

So he's perfect except for the fact he's fucking yer husband and you can't get a look in?

That's about the size of it.

Leave size out of it, Debs, if yer don't mind.

And I just want some.

But he's a bender Deborah. You know, a woolly-pully, a turd-burglar.

Patrick FitzJohn and John Fitzpatrick.

He might be, you know, ambi-sexual.

Ambi what?

Like, you know, do it either way, boys, girls, sheep.

You wish.

Well, Roddie is always smiling at me, and when I come back from Weight-Watchers he always offers to give me a massage.

So why haven't you said yes?

Well, I have, but Joe is so jealous, you know, and I don't want to upset him, not after what happened with that Ukrainian basketball team.

Boys Own Club
by
Allison McVety

Sitting in a business class lounge at Heathrow International Airport is a singular experience for the woman traveling alone. With a good seat offering a clear view, and nothing else to do, it is possible to see all manner of men. They all sport their Executive club cards, the blue bowing down to the silver, as if to say "We are not worthy!" and the silver card holders docking heads in deference to the gold.

It is rather like being transported back in time where boys, sporting short flannel grey trousers, a school blazer and leather satchel, hang around on station platforms. With buff labels marking them out as evacuees, they wait for something extraordinary to happen.

Though today they may have tailored suits and pc bags, it does not take the greatest imagination to produce grubby knees fishing around in ponds looking for sticklebacks; freckled faces, intent upon hunting birds with homemade slings of rubber band and sticks; or ink- stained fingers soaking conkers in vinegar before baking them to use in combat. Their hair may be grey, thinning or to some, lost forever, but they still remain boys at heart.

The young guns sit in Laptop Land pitting Pentium against Centrino technology. Bereft of BMW and Mercedes key fobs, they display their phones and notebooks in the battle for superiority. This is the only place where it is perfectly acceptable to say "Mine is smaller than yours."

All the while head-set man walks around the lounge talking about viable dates, while availing himself of the complimentary refreshments and stuffing pockets full of cake and biscuits for a midnight feast upon arrival. It is easy to picture meetings being arranged and deals brokered, not with some high powered customer with money to spend before the end of the financial year, but with a put-upon wife at the other end of the ear piece saying in soothing tones, "I've ironed your pajamas the way you like them dear, and added an extra pair of socks just in case."

They clutch faxes and notepads to their chests as if afraid that some large lumbering bully will suddenly appear from nowhere and attempt to steal it from them. Espionage is always a firm favourite with these boys, who like to act like corporate James Bonds.

Occasionally, the delightful hierarchical struggle for territory can be seen acted out when two men, in full musk, attempt to get the seat closest to the power point, the telephone, or indeed, the last copy of the Financial Times. It always ends in tears as the lesser of the two retreats to lick his wounds and fight another day. The winner sits in self-congratulatory pose, mopping his brow and basking in victory.

Of course, it does not end in the lounge. There is much amusement to be derived on the aircraft itself as bulging cabin bags are stored overhead in the game of consuming as much locker space as possible, so that late comers are punished by having their luggage stowed in the hold. The smarter traveler will have checked in on-line and nabbed the seats nearest the door so as to be off as soon as the traps are open.

Then there is the suit jacket to consider: it simply has to be hung by the steward in the coat locker. As there is a finite amount of space, the resulting rush can be quite entertaining.

Of course no one watches the security briefing: all being 007s, it is possible to suppose they have their comprehensive survival kits, masquerading in their shirt pockets as harmless ball-point pens, to keep them safe.

Once the plane has landed, fingers hover over seatbelt releases for the rush to be quickest on the draw and up and out of the seat before anyone can pass. Disgorging the contents of overhead lockers onto seats and in to aisles, whilst the late boys remain seated and sulking. Phones are switched on and instantly begin to ring, "I've put your piles ointment in your toilet bag with the toothpaste dear, don't get them mixed up ."

So, all things considered, there really is a lot of fun to be had if you find yourself faced with long delays and are lucky enough to gain access to the Boys Own Club.

The Day Death Missed the Bus
by
Antony Davies

This morning, Duane should be about to die. He isn't going to. But he should do. The bus he usually catches to work is full, going at around forty miles per hour. It isn't going to stop for him. But, indignant, he steps out to flag it down. The bus, full of commuters, brakes and begins to skid. Duane begins to dive out of the way. The bus's back end swerves out.

Duane and the bus collide.

He shoots through the air and lands in a skip of bricks and dusty plaster. An hour later, Duane arrives at the Thompson Printing Works in a taxi, crusted with dust, but otherwise unharmed. One dressing down later and Duane is in his little room, operating his machine: the industrial shredder. Since the introduction of the Data Protection Act, every last unwanted document and piece of imperfect work has to be thoroughly destroyed. This gives Duane a job. An important job, they told him. A very important job.

At morning break, Duane is sitting on the loo. As he reads the sports pages of the Sun, he hears someone in the next cubicle.

"Duane?" comes the voice.

"Hello?" says Duane.

"You are Duane, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"The one who got hit by the bus?"

"That's right."

"Thank God I've found you. I need to buy you a coffee."

"Oh," says Duane. "Okay."

When Duane has thoroughly washed his hands and dried them properly he waits for the other cubicle to open. A seven-foot tall man walks out. He is dressed all in a black robe, with a hood that conceals his face, and he carries a stick taller than him.

"Hello," says the hooded man. He extends a pasty, pale hand. "Pleased to meet you. I am Death."

Duane looks at the hand and smiles. He reaches out and shakes it. "This way to the canteen." And Duane holds the toilet door open.

Death mumbles something to himself and shuffles through the door.

In the canteen nobody looks at Death. Nobody looks at Duane either, but this is not

unusual. Death likes his coffee—perhaps predictably—black. With two sugars. Duane likes cream in his. No sugar. He is sweet enough.

Death huddles over his coffee and draws Duane closer. "It's like this, Duane. I have a problem. You should be dead."

"Oh," says Duane.

"I mean really dead. Totally snuffed out. Crushed, bleeding all over the road."

Duane nods thoughtfully. "I thought something was up."

"I missed you. I'm sorry."

"Oh that's okay. I don't mind. Can I ask how come?"

"Oh, celestial plane stuff. I don't want to bore you."

"Thanks. So what can I do for you?"

"I need you to jump into that industrial shredder of yours."

Duane sits upright. "Why? Why do I have to do that?"

"Well, and again I won't bore you with the details, but when things like this happen, my powers get kind of messed up. I can't kill anyone else until you're dead."

"But I can't jump into the shredder. There are health and safety rules and everything."

"Duane, if I can't kill anyone, the world will get so populated it will simply choke itself to... well, not death, obviously. But something bad. Worse than death probably."

"And me jumping into the shredder will help the world?"

"Yes."

"Couldn't I take a pill or something?"

"Not really no."

"Why?"

"A couple of reasons. The main one being that your body has to be totally and utterly destroyed. Can't have a home for your soul, you see. I mean you could jump into a vat of acid if you prefer but the shredder is much more convenient and—trust me here—a lot less painful."

"But my friends... my family. I got married."

"I know you did, Duane, and I'm sorry."

"To my girlfriend. She married me."

"I know. Look. You'd really be helping me out here. Please. Just jump into that shredder and make sure it's on full."

Duane thinks about this a moment. "How do I know you're really Death?"

Death chuckles. "I get that a lot. Watch this." Death produces a pack of cards seemingly from thin air. He shuffles them professionally and fans them, asks Duane to pick one. Duane does so. Without looking at it, Death takes it from him, holding it flat in the air. Finally, Death says, "Eight of clubs."

Duane whistles. "Impressive. Well, you're certainly magical I'll give you that."

Death jiggles his hand again and the cards disappear. "Thank you."

"But it doesn't mean I can throw myself into the shredder."

Death lifts his coffee with his pasty white hand and it is engulfed by his hood. When he sets it down again, the cup is empty. "Okay. I really don't like doing this, Duane, but you give me no choice." Death snaps his fingers. "Right," he says. "Now we're both invisible."

Duane stands up, goes over to a woman he likes, and waves his hand in front of Brenda's face. She sips her tea and keeps her eyes on the Trisha show in the corner. "Wow," says Duane.

"This way," says Death, and leads Duane to a group of cackling middle-aged women. "You recognize these ladies?"

"Yes," says Duane. "They're my friends. Donna and Wendy and Jane."

"Your friends?" Death sits beside them and whispers something in Donna's ear. Duane takes a seat also, watching them intently. They do not react to his presence.

Donna says, "Did you see Duane this morning?"

"Oh," says Wendy, "wasn't he a state. The poor lamb."

"Poor lamb my aunt Freddy's tits. You know what he says? Says he got hit by a bus!"

"I know," says Jane, "but bless him he can't help it. He just lies all the time. That imaginary wife of his! Imagine! A simpleton like Duane. Married!"

"Yeah," says Donna, "that's even less likely than him surviving being hit by a bus!"

The clique erupts in a shower of cackling coughs and splutters, heads shaking and hands reaching for another cig.

Duane looks at Death. "This can't be real," he says.

"It is real," says Death.

"But I invited them to my wedding. They just couldn't find the church."

"They think you're a liar, Duane. They think you're a simpleton. Your friends think you are a simpleton."

"I'm not a simpleton. I got a GCSE."

"In...?"

"Home economics. But some people failed that. It wasn't easy."

Death takes a deep sigh. "Okay, let me try this..."

They leave Duane's cackling friends and enter the manager's office. Mr. Rimpole is eating a bacon roll, ketchup splashing on the desk. Death glides over and whispers in his ear. Mr Rimpole gets up and walks out of the office.

"We have a few minutes," says Death. He produces a video cassette and begins fiddling with the VCR. "Damn things."

"Here," says Duane, "allow me." And Duane presses a few buttons, takes the video cassette from Death and places it in the slot. "That should do it."

"Thank you," says Death. "Never could get the hang of those machines."

The picture flickers to life. It shows Duane's wife. She is dancing to music at their council flat. There is money all around her and she is kicking notes up in the air. She's wearing a new dress. She's had her hair done.

"She looks happy," says Duane.

Death clouts Duane round the back of the head. "Of course she's happy; you're dead. This is a 'what if...' video. This is her a year after you died. Your insurance money, plus she got to sue the bus people. Remember I said there were two reasons you needed to do this for me? If you jump in the shredder, it'll look like an accident. She'll get your insurance and she'll get to sue this place. She'll be rich. Happy." Death put his arm around Duane. "But you have to die in that shredder of yours."

Duane wants to be brave. Needs to be brave. "Okay," he says, "I'll do it."

And so Duane goes to his little room with his loud machine. He turns it on full, the setting for really big piles of paper. He places the ladders at the side and climbs. Stands over the gaping mouth of the shredder, the blades spinning, some this way, some that way. All of them ready to devour whatever lands upon them. He looks down at the floor where Death is standing. Death waves his hands, hurrying him up. A clatter overhead startles Duane. A sparrow has somehow gotten inside and is trying to escape through the small window up high. It does not understand glass, has no idea why it cannot fly into the sky. Duane looks at Death. Death is turning his head side to side, appears to be looking around the small room.

"Death?" says Duane. "Are you alright there?"

"Yeah, yeah, fine. Just get on with it. Go on, jump."

Duane edges close, can feel the wind from the sinning metal, the vibrations through his feet. One last glance at Death. But he isn't there.

In his place is a young girl. She frowns. "You're not going to jump in there are you?"

"I have to," says Duane. "Death told me to."

"And if Death told you to jump of a bridge, would you?"

Duane's toes poke over the edge. "Probably."

"Of course you would. Well how do you know it was Death?"

"He showed me a trick."

"The card trick?"

"Yes, and other things."

"What other things?"

"He made me invisible so I could listen to people saying bad things about me. He showed me a video of my wife dancing around and happy 'cos I'm dead. And I should be dead. A bus hit me."

The little girl starts to climb the ladder. "Maybe, you big silly, it was all a joke."

"How...?"

"Well, people round here will do anything for a bit of cash. This guy could've slipped your friends a fifty each and told them he was just playing a trick on you."

"But the video..."

She was next to him now, feet dangling over the edge, right above the teeth. "Computer generated. Easily done nowadays. A child could do it. But let's be honest, Duane. You don't actually have a wife, do you?"

Duane looked away from her. "Are you saying it wasn't Death?"

"I can't say for sure. Might be. But there are demons who are always pretending to be each other. It's like a bet the afterlife people have. No one impersonates Death, though. If they tried, well, Death would be one unhappy bunny."

"So it was Death?"

"I don't really know. What I do know is that you jumping in this shredder isn't something Death would suggest. I don't think so anyway. If you were supposed to die when the bus hit you, you would have. That's what I think."

"He did a card trick..."

"And drank black coffee, right?"

"Right."

"He holds the card over the coffee and reads the reflection. It's the first trick you learn when you do die. Fun."

Duane leaned over a little further. "But the insurance money. My wife can sue..."

"You don't have a wife, Duane. Remember? You made her up when Big Betty was coming on to you. And besides, look." The little girl points in the corner near where the sparrow battles with the pane of glass. A CCTV camera. "They'll know you jumped."

Duane closes his eyes and backs away. He sits down hard on the hood of the shredder. He tries hard not to cry, but it's no use.

"Look," says the little girl. "You go get cleaned up, and I'll keep watch here."

"Thank you." And Duane climbs down the ladder and leaves the room.

The little girl swings her legs, giggling as the breeze from the steel blades tickles her legs. The sparrow, giving up on the window, spirals slowly downward. The little girl holds up one finger, smiling sweetly. The sparrow chirps a couple of times and perches on the little girl's finger. And then it drops into the shredder, stone dead, even before it touches metal.

Brief History of Machismo, With Attention to the Male Mystique by **Michael Fowler**

It takes only a quick glance at our culture to see that the citizens who pack the most machismo are musicians, particularly rock musicians, but anyway pickers and singers. Guys who play musical instruments and sing, activities that even children and women can do, are the baddest guys around. They strut around in leather and chains and Halloween makeup to prove it. It also takes only a fast peek at our past to see that, as recently as fifty years ago, the dudes with the most outsized machismo were mathematicians and scientists, guys who were unleashing the atom on an unsuspecting planet.

In the forties and fifties, musicians could be cool but not possess machismo. Crazy as they played, they were not, to use the term most often employed, macho. Macho was J. Robert Oppenheimer who could blow anybody away with his atom bomb. Women blushed and fainted when Oppie strode by, and if he'd only played a Hagstrom six-string through a stack of Marshall amps back then, he'd have had every woman in the world at his feet. The most macho musician in the fifties was probably Bill Haley with his Comets, and note that he named his band after an astronomical phenomenon, trying to cop some of that mathematical machismo. Bill Haley couldn't score any chicks without hinting at scientific prowess, and chicks were first and foremost what owning machismo was about, with being able to destroy the planet at number two.

How did our present day reversal, with musicians now more macho than mathematicians, come about, and what if anything can we do to put the number crunchers back on top again, assuming we care to? To answer this we're going to have to go back to the very beginnings of math and music and check out the scene then and how it's changed today. Well, we won't go all the way back, but we will go back pretty far, and quickly too, so fasten your safety harness and hang on.

Around Shakespeare's time musicians were far from macho. It's clear from the plays of the Bard that your average musician was a small, beardless man dressed in green with a funny hat and bells and curled slippers called a minstrel. He sang songs like:

Oh we sport and jolly on the green
Hey ho hey ho
And we dancey prancey o'er the scene
Sing nonny nonny oh.

While singing this bubblegum drivel, the minstrel skipped about trying to play power chords on his lute. That he sometimes managed to slip into milady's chamber after hours was a start toward becoming macho, but that he could be swatted to death like a mosquito and didn't know which end of a sword to hold was against him. If our little green minstrel had thought to put on a suit of armor and clank around while singing, he might have been macho centuries ago. But he didn't, the nance, and no court musicians or wandering minstrels had fan clubs or groupies.

If you want to see who was macho in Shakespeare's day, or nearly in Shakespeare's day since he was born a hundred years later, check out Isaac Newton. He wasn't macho as we understand it today, of course, since he was completely unmusical and died a virgin, but he

made enormous strides. Look at that long hippie hair and glowering gaze in his portrait. Dig his manly controversies with Hooke and Leibnitz. Newton didn't take nothing from nobody. And could he play draughts! Let him king a man and you were dead!

In Newton's day math and science had as much to do with magic and mystery, and therefore with love and the whole range of emotions, as they did with hard, dry science. Newton had the ability to fathom the mysterious unknown, and that gave him his macho aura. Everyone was affected; he was a superstar to his secretary and gardener; an outrageous egotist to Hooke; a Joe Camel to women, or he would have been if he'd known any women. It's easy to imagine Zak or Izzy Newton behind a synthesizer at Woodstock 2004, mesmerizing the crowd with keyboard genius and scoring chicks by the bushel, because he has that universal control.

In fact, mathematicians controlled the mysterious and swayed our emotions from early times, right up until they wore us out with the atom bomb. Go all the way back to ancient Greece and Archimedes, whose 'Give me a point to stand on and I'll move the world' is still the last word on catapults. Archimedes was a mathematician and a stud. No musician could stand up to him, not with those puny reed flutes they had way back then, and women loved the way he touched them and said 'Eureka!' His type ruled unchallenged until the bomb.

When the bomb became an unpleasant fact of life, though, musicians got to work and took crowd approval away from the math guys. Oppenheimer, macho for years, spent his last days suspected of being a Commie and trying to cut down on cigarettes. Einstein, a rugged honcho who combined long-haired glam and violin prowess with mathematical testosterone, ended up a fat guy with liver trouble. Now the bomb was deadly and a drag, and the tool of nerds. Real men didn't invent that kind of bumper. Real men were math illiterates who liked to split your wig and stomp your carcass. To bring popularity to this kind of behavior, they had the amplified heartthrob of ever-louder rock music. Now science was cold and deadly, but rock heated up the world. Our passions and emotions passed out of the hands of the mathematicians and into the fists of Megadeth and Anthrax. Doesn't it explain these groups' names, that they are at least as powerful as the bomb?

But Megadeth, Anthrax and kindred so-called 'heavy' musicians are in reality painted actors and not macho at all, as anyone who goes to their concerts knows. Without lighting effects and limos and overpriced tickets they would collapse on stage. It's time, I think, for a new definition of macho, or rather a return to its original mathematical connotation. The question is, who sways our emotions more, mathematicians or musicians? Who has more power? And of course, who scores more chicks?

Probably the musicians still out-gun the mathematicians in these respects, but the tide I think is already turning. On college campuses across the land we are beginning to see math majors in chains and leather with a lot of tattoo work and body piercings. Chicks are drooling over these guys and getting their help with calculus and set theory. At the same time, rock groups are forming whose members weigh about 115 pounds and refrain from sex until marriage and don't even wear makeup with their fruity 100% cotton clothes. Finally, if mathematicians can find something as terrifying as the atom bomb again, and they probably will, then they will certainly have more machismo than musicians, at least until people get tired of being afraid of it.

The End

Pete And My Peter
by
Nathan Graziano

Two weeks into my sophomore year of college, I received a disastrous haircut from a guy on the third floor of the dorm who owned a set of hair clippers. He was referred to simply as Drain-O. The rumor had it that he drank a shot of the liquid plumber on a five-dollar bet and nearly killed himself.

Drain-O didn't have any hair of his own; he shaved it right down to the skin. Nevertheless, I allowed him to cut mine. He shaved the sides and the back of my head with clippers, leaving a bowl of hair on the top that hung down over the shaved portions like a spider plant. I looked the like the inverse of a balding man painfully trying to maintain a ponytail.

"Looks cool," Drain-O said, standing in front of me and checking to be sure it was even. He had tattoos of flames on both forearms and a spike impaled through his bottom lip. It was impossible to determine his age. I estimated it to be somewhere between 20 and 65.

I stood up and walked to the mirror on his closet door. When I saw myself I bit down on my bottom lip to keep from crying. It looked as if the top of my head had vomited. I was half-tempted to ask Drain-O to just shave the rest of it. But I couldn't. I didn't want to insult his work and have him pummel me into a thin pulp.

I wiped my eyes and turned around. "Looks, um, great. Thanks, Drain-O," I said.

"Not a problem. My pleasure," he said. "Spread the word, anyone who wants a haircut can get in touch with me. "I'll do it for a bowl pack."

"Thanks again," I said. "I think my buddy Pete is coming up later." I left the room, leaving a bud on his desk for payment. I didn't bother to warn Pete. I didn't want to suffer alone.

After the haircut, I began a regiment of strict masturbation. In order to make the act more realistic, I started picking out imaginary girlfriends and would try to remain faithful to them. This involved thinking exclusively about one girl while flogging the dolphin. Sometimes when the thought of another woman would slip into my mind during one of my self-sessions, a sense of guilt, dishonor and melancholy would follow my climax.

Again, I'd start to weep. I wept often during this period of my life. I didn't want to become the type of man with a terrible haircut who cheated on his imaginary girlfriends. The thought sickened me.

There was some solace in the fact that Pete had to suffer through the same haircut. But the main difference between Pete and I was that Pete was still handsome enough to pick up women. He had also completely stopped attending his classes, so he had a lot of time to

groom his hair each morning to make it look presentable. I, on the other hand, opted for the baseball hat.

The one class that Pete did attend was a biology lab, which we were both enrolled in. It wasn't Pete's genuine desire to be around beakers and microscopes, glass slides and protective goggles that motivated him to attend. Rather, it was my imaginary girlfriend. Seeing I had never spoken a word to her and nothing short of the spider plant catching fire on a Bunsen burner would've caught her attention, I never learned her real name. But I called her Bella, after one of my favorite porn stars. She was a small, slim girl with straight black hair, a bronzed complexion and a tight, round ass. Her nose bore a tiny bump along the bridge, a slight imperfection, which was juxtaposed with a luscious set of natural DD breasts. They were completely disproportionate with her tiny frame and looked like a burden to carry. But thankfully, for my sake, she endured.

Every Thursday morning Bella would proudly display her delicious jugs in an array of tight tops and blouses. I confided in Pete, who was equally enamored by Bella, that she had become my imaginary girlfriend. And each Thursday morning after class and before I went to lunch, I would run back to my dorm room and pleasure myself thinking about her. My roommate had a class at that time, so he was never there, and Bella and I were free to make torrid, sweaty love in the privacy of my own mind. Afterwards, I would walk with Pete to the dining hall.

It was a warm autumn morning when Bella's red tank top erected my first classroom hard-on since my sophomore year in high school. Pete skipped class that day, and while I was supposed to be examining at a cell that I scraped from the inside of my cheek, I kept casting furtive glances at Bella's breasts. For the next 80 minutes, I tried to occupy my mind with thoughts about geriatric lovemaking to keep my hard-on at bay. Once class ended, I sprinted back to my dorm room.

I had my pants around my knees and was in mid-stroke by the time I hit the bed. I pictured Bella straddling my hips, wearing a short black skirt, without panties. She slipped my cock inside her soaked pussy, her thighs tensing as she pulled the red tank top over her head and buried my face in her massive cleavage. I took a breast in each hand and massaged her nipples between my thumbs and index fingers, nibbling on them like a gerbil. She moaned sweetly as my cock pulsed inside of her.

"Yes, yes, yes, Ham. Suck on my giant tits, tiger," Bella whispered as her pace quickened and she worked towards the type of life-altering orgasm that only I could give her. "I'm going to come." She arched her back and started rubbing her clit in small quick circles. "Yes, yes. Right there. I'm going to..."

"Lunch. Do you want to come?" The door swung open. I had forgotten to lock it. Pete stood in the doorway, his mouth open. My entire body convulsed. It was one of those slow-motion moments where the mind tries to conceptualize the tragedy at hand.

I yelped and quickly tried to pull up my pants. "OH MY GOD! I'M BEATING OFF!" I screamed. For some reason, I felt the need to state the obvious.

Pete chuckled and closed the door. I lay on my back, covering my eyes with my arm. At this point, I realized it would be nearly impossible to finish. I ended up giving myself a case of blue balls. There I was a 19-year old with a bad haircut, no sex life, an imaginary girlfriend

and a case of self-inflicted blue balls. On top of that, I'd have to find Pete and face the impending humiliation. It seemed like a reasonable time to kill myself.

But I didn't. Instead, I zipped up my pants, grabbed my hat and walked down the hallway to Pete's room. I knocked on the door.

"Come in," Pete said. He was lying on his bed, thumbing through a magazine.

I walked in with my head down. "It was Bella," I said. "She wore a red tank top. I forgot to lock the door."

Pete laughed. "Don't sweat it, Ham. These things happen. My mother caught me whacking my Willy once."

"Really? What happened?"

"It was a Saturday morning and I thought everyone was asleep. I thought it was safe."

"That's horrible, Pete."

"Yeah, I had thrown off the covers and everything. I was butt naked on my bed, beating it like a redheaded stepchild when my mother walked in my room to get my laundry. I was just about to shoot. Man, it was a bad scene."

"Did you blow your wad?" For some reason, I needed to know.

Pete slowly shook his head. "Not really. A little dribbled out. But most of it stayed bottled up," he said. "I heard somewhere that you can get prostrate cancer that way."

"Yeah. You really should get in the habit of finishing once you start," I said.

"Want to go get some food? It's the baked macaroni and cheese today," Pete said, grabbing his coat off the back of his desk chair.

"Sounds good."

That day we saw Bella at the dining hall, and Pete was able to witness the red tank top for himself. After lunch I went back to my room and locked the door. I didn't want to get prostrate cancer.

The Brightest Inventions Under Heaven
by
Ross Eldridge

I'm pretty sure I invented the paper protection that people now can quickly take from a box and place on the seat of a public toilet. I invented it a long time ago—we're talking over thirty years—and I told a friend about it at the time. We had a laugh as it seemed ridiculous in 1972, and I suggested printing on the paper, perhaps as a watermark if ink could possibly stain the neither regions. I had seen something amusing on toilet paper out of a public bathroom in Scotland that someone had in her collection. The Edinburgh health authorities could have printed something by Robert Burns, that greatest of Scottish poets, along the lines of: "My fause lover stole my rose, but ah! He left the thorn wi' me." That would be art, as well as a collectors' item, and it would be truly useful too. Instead, the taxpayers' money was spent on this brief instruction:

NOW WASH YOUR HANDS

My friend now claims he does not recall our conversation about the paper rings for public toilets, so we might have been out drinking and I might have spoken to someone else with a beard while in a nightclub restroom. All my friends should be prepared to take notes in shorthand when I'm around, as you never know what brilliant idea will burst from my mind at the speed of a rat on crack.

As I'm probably not going to get to claim inventor's rights to paper protection for toilet seats, I'm wondering if there might be a market for an illustrated version of the product. Can one now print in ink that will not leave the user with a back end that looks like the wrapping for fish and chips? How about in colour? Might reproductions of great art catch on? "Why," remarks a matron before lowering herself, "I believe I saw this one in the Tate Modern." Of course, holiday and seasonal themes are a given: A Christmas wreath on the ring, or bats for Halloween, Easter eggs and birthday candles.

Clever and catchy enough? If you think so, call me.

A few months ago, I heard that Charles Rolland Douglass—the man who invented "canned laughter"—had died. I cannot say that I ever enjoyed hearing laughter after every seven or eight words on American television programmes. The political sound bite started there, don't you think? I certainly prefer television without the manufactured responses. As revenge, I thought Mr. Douglass's funeral service might have been interesting with—well—canned laughter: Not just when the coffin lid was opened, but during the prayers, the hymns and the eulogy.

As we cannot put the laughter back in the can, why don't we extend the use of canned emotions? If laughter is not appropriate, how about canned weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth? If there is some good reason for situation comedies to require this treatment to make it more natural, why not last rites and marriages?

I attended a small church here in Bermuda for a time, and the pianist had left the Island and of the forty or fifty members of the congregation, not one knew how to find Middle C on

a piano, much less go on from there. A small tape recorder arrived, along with tapes of the instrumental music for the more popular hymns in the group's hymnbook. The group's leader's assistant would direct-waving his hands about importantly-the tape recorder and the few people in the church that day. Out of the forty or fifty people on the church records, not half would show up for services, even fewer could sing, and fewer still knew the songs, and some were too hot and tired. Actually, it was mostly myself singing.

Needed: Canned music, canned singing, canned mumbling and coughing, and, finally, the sounds, on tape, of several older people making noises in their sleep. And a canned Amen!

A good idea? Call me.

One frequent criticism of my work-my writing-is that it gets too complicated. Some worry that the plot is not revealed completely until the account finishes, others hate the long sentences, others cringe when I go off on a side-trip. I never did take a coach from London to Manchester without making several stops in rest areas, and without seeing over the back of people's garden walls. There may be people who fall asleep the minute they sit down, and who wake seven or eight hours later saying: "That is the only way to do it!" but I was cursed with a curiosity.

There are abridged versions of famous novels, plays and even the Bible. When I was a boy we had comic book versions of the classics, and I wonder if these are still available today. I picture a teenager-a little spotty and in clothes that I just don't understand-looking through comic book titles: Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea; War of the Worlds; Little Women; Lorna Doone; Tom Sawyer; 1984; Gone With The Wind; Valley of the Dolls; Brave New World; Canterbury Tales; The Catcher in the Rye .

"This looks like a good one!" and the boy smiles and takes the comic book to the counter. It is the abridged and illustrated version of Shakespeare's Hamlet, with Hamlet scratched out and Piglet inserted.

Is there a market for books that are really short, to the point, easy to read, and translated into good, modern American?

Call me. We'll write them.

The first time I saw a microwave range at a friend's home, I was quite amazed and, of course, we put a stale piece of bread in the thing, turned it on for twenty seconds and then removed the bread, soft and freshened, if not exactly fresh according to the date on the packaging. We followed that experiment by baking banana bread, and I guess we chose that recipe because we had bananas to spare. The banana bread came out looking sickly, though it cooked in some fashion quite quickly. What a great timesaving invention.

I was given a microwave oven a year ago, and I've made use of it: It is perfect for softening a pound of butter when I'm making bread or a cake. I bubbled with excitement telling my therapist about this new toy, and he said: "The microwave is perfect for coffee." I was not so sure, thinking he meant from scratch. "No," he replied, "to warm coffee that has gone cold." Apparently, the man makes one cup of coffee in the morning, but takes all day to

drink it. He pops the partially filled mug in the microwave from time to time.

"What the world needs," I announced, and saw that my therapist was writing this down quickly in his current file—which is thicker than several Sunday newspapers—for he knows I am given to moments of invention, "is the coffee-mug sized microwave oven."

"That's odd."

"Of course," I continued, "but it makes sense. The process is miniaturized, there is no excess, and it would be such a wonderful gift along the lines of a toaster, a blender, an electric carving knife and an electric mixer with three bowls."

"Do you think someone might have invented this already?" and he was poised to write his shorthand again.

"I'm not sure. I invented the paper seat protectors for toilets so many decades ago, but let that one slip away from me. Can I afford to waste time?"

I believe I will call the device a "Mecro-Waahv"—pronounced just as it looks—knowing how successful the Haagen Daz's ice cream products have been on the strength of their peculiar brand name.

Not much bigger than a coffee mug, the Mecro-Waahv will fit in any room at home, in case you wanted to spend the day in bed reading and sipping hot coffee very slowly. An office accessory, of course, and if you were ill you could heat boiling water with honey and lemon, or chicken soup, and make yourself well again.

This is a product demanding invention. In ten years time, of course, it will have been updated to include a small television screen on the door, a mobile telephone, and a matter-transporter, and still be under twenty dollars, adjusted for inflation.

You agree? Call me.

We live in an age of lists and summaries and brief responses, the least among us require Post-it Notes if we cannot afford a secretary or friends knowing shorthand. Everything must happen now, without forethought or foreplay. If we can get our art in a bathroom and save a trip to the gallery, that's excellent.

I'll stop now, for 1,500 words are too many. I need to invent a computer programme that automatically takes any number of words and creates an accurate précis in the number required.

When I invent that, I'll apply it here. Call me.

A Ride For Miss M
by
Vanessa Gebbie

Ambrosia Martin and Selwyn the peripatetic librarian had been in a meaningful and energetic relationship for some weeks. Selwyn, who was acutely aware that he had to make up for lost time, was trying to be inventive. Having waited for certain experiences longer than most, he wanted to keep these as fresh and exciting as possible. His imagination was working flat out, as he filled the shelves of the mobile library, ready for its next visit to Miss Martin's hometown. He held a colourful tome ready for the cookery section, with a garish cover depicting some sort of glutinous sweetmeat, and toyed idly with the idea of covering the naked Miss Martin with something delicious, then slowly and seductively licking it off her. The idea was fine, until two things got in the way. Jenkins the cat, and his, Selwyn's, own tastes. Selwyn could picture Jenkins arriving uninvited at the feast, noisily licking whatever it was off Miss Martins, and quite killing the moment. Also, the only thing Selwyn really liked on his bread was Sandwich Spread, and he didn't think springing a bath of this on Miss Martin would have the desired effect. The idea of his arriving at Miss Martin's house clutching a bunch of crysanthms and a catering pack of Sandwich Spread brought on a bout of depression.

Selwyn went round distracted, and even catalogued some new books incorrectly. After a while however, inspiration appeared shyly round the corner. Distant memories surfaced, and slowly revealed themselves to be quite inspirational as they came into focus. He recalled a visit to a nearby town with a film club, and a viewing of a rather second-rate but educational film that included steamy scenes in the back of a car. He resolved to give it a go.

There was only one small flaw in this embryonic erotic plan, and that was the lack of a vehicle. Although he had learned to drive years ago, Selwyn had never seen his way to affording a car of his own, and when one was needed, he borrowed one, usually from one of two trusted sources, Idris and Hank.

Idris ap Griffiths was an old school chum, a regular of "The Prince of Wales," and a reader of Dennis Wheatley. Idris was rapidly being promoted through the ranks at the local undertakers. One of the perks of the job was the use of the hearse when it was not otherwise occupied. Depending on bookings, Idris was quite happy for Selwyn to take the hearse on occasion, and to date, this arrangement had worked satisfactorily. That evening in the pub, regulars could have overheard the following:

"Here's your snowball, Idris, and a packet of Salt and Vinegar... is that right?"

"Diolch, Selwyn, perfect. Duw, there's a day I've had. I stopped for a fag between jobs, forgot the time, had to rush to collect dead Mrs. Roberts, and got done for speeding on the way back to the depot."

"Oh, there's a shame, still, Mrs. Roberts wouldn't worry would she?"

"No. S'pose not. Now, what did you want to see me about? Borrow the hearse again is it? What for this time?"

Selwyn told him. Idris paused in mid-snowball, and coughed.

"You mean in the back of the hearse?"

"That's right." Selwyn took a sip of his cider. "I could cover the runners with a blanket, I thought. What do you think?"

Idris, if nothing else, was dedicated to his job, therefore the needs of his customers were paramount, and he was not about to offend anyone, alive or otherwise. "I can't see dead Mrs. Roberts liking it very much," he said. "She has to travel along those runners after you."

So that had come to nothing, which was disappointing, the hearse having the potential of such a lot of room in the back... at least you knew you could lie down in a hearse. Still....

That left Hank. On reflection, Selwyn thought he might be a better bet after all.

Hank Harris, another old school chum, had been christened Hengist Harris, as his mother was half way through a very good course on Viking history when he was born. Following a birthday trip to Florida at the age of nine, he had changed his name to Hank, and become an Americanophile in the extreme. He was never seen without his Stetson, and his prize possession and only means of livelihood was a large pink Chevrolet. This had white-wall tyres, a column change, and very prominent chrome bumpers both front and rear. He had named the car Dolly Parton after his favourite singer. Dolly had a neon sign on her roof announcing herself to be: "Paradise Taxis," and a slogan painted in gold ran along both her sides, thus: "Every Trip is a Trip to Heaven." The Wesleyan Minister had objected, as he found it threatening, until Hank pointed out that his trips were much shorter and quicker than the Minister's, and that if they all ended up in the same place then what was the matter?

"Paradise Taxis" had been doing rather well recently, as several regular customers had used Dolly's services to get them as far as Cardiff for the Rugby... and back. Hank had increased the fare to cover the spillage, and with the residue he had installed a tannoy system in Dolly, through which he could broadcast either music (Country and Western, naturally) or announcements to the listening populace as he drove through the town. He had stocked up with Dolly Parton recordings, taped off his old vinyl collection playing on an elderly and often arthritic Dansette, which lent an interesting twist to records as it played at varying speeds throughout.

Learning from his mistake of being rather too explicit with Idris, Selwyn procured the use of Dolly for an evening on the pretext of going to visit his elderly uncle who lived some twenty miles further into Wales.

Miss Martin was ready. In fact, she had been ready for about two hours, and was checking her new lipstick shade "The Mystery of Mauve" for the umpteenth time, when she heard music. Country and Western music. Loud Country and Western music, which was getting louder by the minute. The doorbell rang. Selwyn had been very mysterious on the phone, and had just said that they were going out, and to bring a cushion. He stood on the doorstep, wearing a wide grin. Behind him, parked nonchalantly in the street, engine purring, and attracting not a little interest from the residents was Dolly Parton. The strains

of "Stand By Your Man" were slowing down to a growl as the tannoy picked up and amplified the last dying part of Hank's tape. Miss Martin and Selwyn locked up and walked to the car. As if to welcome them the loudspeaker emitted a loud purring sound, together with what sounded like a burp. "Jenkins..." muttered Selwyn, marching to the door. He had left the window open; Jenkins had jumped in, and was becoming frantically aroused by the microphone. Selwyn was determined that the wretched Jenkins should not scupper this romantic journey. "Out you go," he said between clenched teeth as he ejected the cat none too gently. Miss Martin settled herself into the passenger side of the bench seat. "Oh, this is lovely," she said, patting the cream leather. Dolly's throaty engine increased in volume. Selwyn smiled enigmatically, and crunched the gears: "You just wait."

Dolly Parton made her regal way deeper and deeper into the countryside, down ever-decreasing lanes. She slowed down eventually as Selwyn persuaded her through an open gateway into a field. They bumped somewhat unceremoniously across the tussocks, until they stopped at the very edge, well away from the lane, under an overhanging ash tree growing in the hedge. Selwyn switched off the ignition, and turned to Ambrosia, one arm along the back of the bench seat. "Here we are," he said. Miss Martin looked round. "And where's that?" she asked suspiciously, eying the muddy and churned ground outside the car. "Providence." said Selwyn. "Providence" was the name of a farm owned by Horace Hughes, yet another of Selwyn's old school friends, but this time, he had not asked permission, for he knew that the said friend was away for the day on a trip to market with his best ram. The ram was to be sold, so Horace had said, as he was a fertile and expensive pedigree beast, and Horace was hoping to replace him with a cheaper version, and maybe a few ewes into the bargain. The field was therefore quiet, and gloriously empty. Selwyn leaned over to the back seat, from which he produced a basket, containing a bottle of champagne and two glasses, together with a small packet of sandwiches. Miss Martin blushed and giggled as Selwyn handed her the glasses. Then, and with not a little twisting, screwing and pulling at arms length, he uncorked the bottle, causing a parabola of foam to cascade into the waiting glasses. He took one from Miss Martin, and held out the accompanying delicacies... "Sandwich Spread?" he enquired, innocently.

A little later, Selwyn realised that he ought to have manoeuvred Miss Martin into the back seat, but things had moved on a little too quickly for that, as she was, having drunk two glasses of Mr. Evan's best champagne, rather willing. Dolly Parton's front seat thus became the site of a very successful interlude, one that came up to Selwyn's expectations in every way, and even surpassed them in one or two.

Horace, having been to market, having sold his ram for a good sum, and having purchased a replacement cheaper version and a convenient harem, had returned home later that afternoon, via several watering holes of his acquaintance. Backing his horsebox none too steadily into the gateway of the field, he had set his new charges free in a haze of alcohol, only just remembering to shut the gate behind them, and then he had gone home to sleep off the days exertions.

The sheep tumbled about the field, sticking together in a large mass of greyish wool on thirty-odd spindly legs. The ram, angered by his ignominious bundling into the trailer, partitioned from his women, was feeling the need to assert his position fast, and he careered after the sheep with a hopeful and somewhat desperate look in his eye. Understandably, the women, having just endured a stop-start journey, in which Horace had consumed all the drinks and offered none to them, were in no mood for frivolity. They

rushed away from the ram in an unbreakable knot, and took refuge between a convenient large pink car and the nearby hedge.

The ram continued his charge, his devious intent obvious. When he got closer he was enraged to see his harem being sheltered by Dolly Parton, the interloper, rocking purposefully on her white wall tyres. At some point in the proceedings Miss Martin's foot had knocked against the control button of the tannoy, switching on the microphone again. The sheep were listening with varying degrees of interest to the sounds emanating from the loudspeaker. The ram, believing this to subvert his new authority, pawed the ground and challenged Dolly to a duel. All she did was continue to rock and to make odd noises. This insolence enraged the ram beyond endurance, and he charged at Dolly, butting her rear bumper hard, causing her to rock even more. "

Oh Selwyn, you are amazing," the loudspeaker said to the sheep.

The ram continues to assault Dolly's rear. The loudspeaker continued to regale the sheep with choice words of love. Then, four things happened almost simultaneously. The ram's horns became caught under Dolly's bumper. Selwyn's elbow caught the handbrake lever and moved it a fraction. Miss Martin's foot hit the tape controls, and Horace, having fallen into a pleasant doze by the Aga, was woken by loud pop music coming from the direction of his new sheep. Cursing, he pulled on his coat to go and see what had happened.

Reaching the field, he stumbled sleepily in the direction of the music.

A bright pink car was slowly bumping her way down the gentle incline at the end of the field, pushed from behind by his new ram. Horace blinked, and shook his head to clear it. The vision persisted. A line of sheep followed the ram, whose head was down, shoving the car for all he was worth... or so it seemed. This procession was accompanied by the strains of "Stand by Your Man" rising and falling in pitch as the car rocked its gentle way towards the duck pond.

Horace shrugged, and turned to go back to his warm kitchen. "That's the last time I go to *The Red Fox*, he vowed. "I knew the ale was off."

The Art of Ass Talk
by
Elise Ure



Boozin' Monkeys Are Awesome
by
Valerie



Contributor Biographies

Bryan Thao Worra wrote us the following poem in response to his acceptance. This happens sometimes, and we always think it's pretty damn cool. So we use it now as his biography:

I wrote you once
I wrote you twice
Heavens,
I even
Wrote you thrice.
Your news is better than
The number eleven
Or shorts chewed up
By errant mice.
I'll spread the word
Until it's heard
Or I'm stopped in my tracks
By some giant bird.

Cindy Puzak does not write poetry from her own perspective. The fact that she lives in a trailer park and is terrified of Jesus is purely coincidental.

J.D. Nelson is the kind of guy that celebrates Dan Akroyd's birthday and claims to speak in tongues when it's obvious he's speaking English. Funnily enough, J.D. claims that it was none other than Bryan Thao Worra that inspired him to submit some of his own stuff to *Defenestration*. And by "inspired," we mean "threw rocks at."

K.T. May says: "I'm 22. I'm a fifth year college student working full-time while running my own house. I've been writing since I was nine years old and was also recently published on Purpledream.com, as well as in the ShowcaseLounge.com." Upon hearing that her poem held the record for *Defenestration's* "Longest Title Of Anything On The Entire Planet," Karen Ashburner was heard to exclaim, "Fabulous. I love being a record holder. Now where's my prize money?"

Alex Keegan is occasionally serious and writes a lot of stuff. Some of it is almost OK and his website is <http://www.alexkeegan.com>. He runs a writers group which is seriously helpful but definitely kick-ass called Boot Camp.

Two significant events occurred at **Allison McVety's** birth - her sister took one look at her and howled for a dog and her father, not expecting another girl, and having no name prepared, named her after a horse that promptly fell at the first fence. Add to that a nose that inspired Concorde engineers, and you will understand why she has sought solace in laughter and writing.

Antony Davies says: "I am twenty-nine, currently working in England, although with a little luck and a lot of squeezing of my latent genius, I hope one day to be a citizen of the World, writing wherever the wind blows me (leaning boldly toward the best snowboarding peaks and picturesque skydiving centres). Currently my favourite country is New Zealand, but I have yet to visit South Africa, Thailand or the States. Failing this I will be happy to hammer out a living selling quirky novels to people who don't know any better."

On his rapid walks through his hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio, **Mike Fowler** spreads a trail of pheromones that people are quick to pick up on. Women stop and say, 'Who is that good-looking man?' Men shake their heads and mutter, 'He's got it all. I can't compete.' The analysis of his armpit swabs shows that Mike is indeed a fortunate guy.

Nathan Graziano is married, but currently dating the Bush twins. Jenna likes to call him her little "snuggle bear." His first book of short fiction *Frostbite* was published in 2002 by Green Bean Press. Being a man of sound ethics, he continually attempted to move the book in Barnes and Noble from the fiction shelf onto the Oprah's Book Club shelf when nobody was looking. Whether that helped sales or not is still undetermined. He's the author of *Not So Profound*, a collection of new and selected poems, and five chapbooks. His latest offering is a collaborative chapbook of short fiction with his friend Daniel Crocker called *Chickenshits*. Nude photos of the author in compromising positions as well as more information about him and his books can be found on his website <http://nathangraziano.freeservers.com/> .

Ross Eldridge is a Brit who never uses public conveniences in Bermuda, where he lives, because he can't think where any are located. He does occasionally review art exhibitions, which are advertized more conveniently. Ross reheated some chicken in his microwave oven today, and wonders how he managed without that ... yes ... convenience. You can email Ross if it's not inconvenient: REwriter@northrock.bm

Vanessa Gebbie says: "I was born. I was potty trained and learned to talk. Then there was no stopping me. V, I thought, what's the pinnacle of achievement in life? What is Nirvana apart from a group? And verily it came to me one night, Defenestration. I subbed by pigeon, was accepted by limerick. Three times. Life was sweet. But the downside...? What is there to live for, now? Now that I've been here? Three bloody times? Oh God, life is so cruel...." (Dies).

Some fun facts you may not know about **Elise Ure**: She's female. She's been drawing since she was two. She's taking art in school. She's got a gallery full of her other pieces over at <http://smeagoldfish.deviantart.com>. She defeated Godzilla with a carton of milk and a crate of defective plastic kitchen cutlery. And now you know!

Valerie says: "Getting plastered with monkeys has its fun, but one of them always thinks it's hilarious to steal all of the liquor and run off with it. That usually results in an unruly mob of drunk monkeys with baseball bats. Booze stealing is so not kosher."