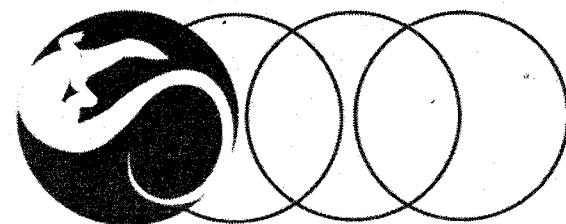


the end?



**the monitor.**



volume 12 >> issue 4

**a campus collective.**

13 december, 2006

# the monitor.

**campus collective**  
independent quality since 1995

**volume 12 >> issue 4**

## CAMPUS ADDRESS

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The Monitor is published every other  
Tuesday. We meet every Thursday  
at 9:00 p.m. in BH 312. Each writer is  
responsible for his or her own work.

"Among people who have learned  
something from the 18th century (say,  
Voltaire) it is a truism, hardly deserving  
discussion, that the defense of the right  
of free expression is not restricted to  
ideas one approves of, and that it is  
precisely in the case of ideas found  
most offensive that this right must be  
vigorously defended. Advocacy of the  
right to express ideas that are generally  
approved of is, quite obviously, a matter  
of no significance." --Noam Chomsky

**FAC**  
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# Editors' Box

It has been a while since Truman has  
seen an issue of the Monitor. We apolo-  
gize for that. The fact is, we didn't have  
enough submissions or money to do more  
than one more issue this semester. How-  
ever, this one is a fine issue. We're really  
going out with a bang.

Speaking of going out, you must  
be wondering about the cover art. Well,  
friends, the honest truth is that your trusty  
Monitor is in a bit of jeopardy. Not to  
worry, though; we've got solutions. Hav-  
ing been denied funding from the Funds  
Allotment Council for next semester, we  
are going to have to come up with a new  
way of bringing Monitor fun to you.

And now the big announcement...

The Monitor is going online!

It's a big change, and a first in our  
history, but we feel going online will ben-  
efit this community in many ways. First,  
it will not require us to do fundraisers and  
try to sell a ton of ads to cover the printing  
costs. Second, it will be environmentally  
wise because we will be saving a lot of  
paper. Third, it will be trendy. Fourth,  
updates of news, opinions and other bits  
of wit will be continuously available to  
the Monitor readers, both on campus and  
around the world. How convenient for all

you true fans when you graduate.

This is not to say that you will never  
again see a print edition of the Monitor.  
The new generation of editors are plan-  
ning a hybrid semester in which you might  
see both print and electronic versions of  
this little paper. It will be swell.

Additionally, as you might notice, this  
is our short story issue. Maybe it is our  
fault for not putting up fliers about it, but  
there were surprisingly few submissions  
this semester. It is usually such a beloved  
issue, but people must not have found the  
time to submit. As you will see, there are  
but five submissions. Two of them are  
ineligible for the grand prize because they  
went over the word count, and one is by  
an editor, so it is also ineligible. Our win-  
ner this semester is Adam Dorhauer. His

is probably  
the shortest  
submission  
ever to win,  
but that is ok.  
The guide-  
lines just say  
to keep it  
under 1,000  
words, which  
he did. Con-  
grats Adam.  
Sarah Renee  
Vanderwurf  
gets our

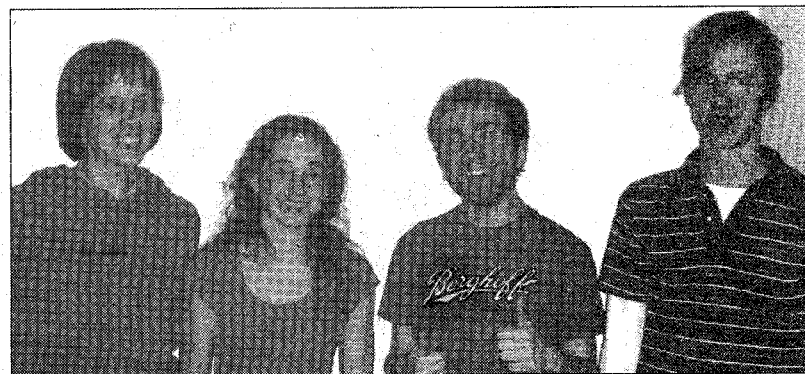
honorable mention this semester. Thanks  
Sarah.

Finally, one editor would like to say  
good-bye. Emily is graduating this week.  
The Monitor has been an incredible expe-  
rience for her. She has made great friends,  
had a lot of fun, and learned a lot of valu-  
able layout skills that she will take to her  
journalism career. She thanks everyone  
who has been involved with the Monitor  
since she's been around for being cool.

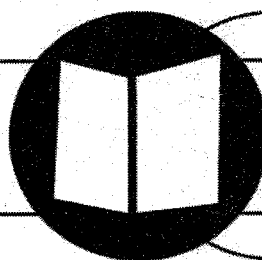
We hope you enjoy this issue during  
your last days of the semester. Keep your  
eyes peeled next semester for announce-  
ments regarding the new Monitor Web  
site.

Love,

## the editors.



# news



## Police arrest naked man for concealed weapon

**story by >> Nick Wilsey**

Authorities arrested 33-year-old John  
Sheenan on suspicions of indecent exposure and  
concealing a weapon after receiving a complaint  
concerning a naked man masturbating in a pub-  
lic park in El Cerrito, California.

Detective Corporal Don Horgan said he  
found Sheenan vigorously whacking his wood  
on a tree stump near a Bay Area Rapid Transit  
station the morning of Nov. 2, 2006. As police  
approached Sheenan with handcuffs, they asked  
if he were carrying any concealed weapons  
or drugs. Sheenan said he indeed carried a  
weapon: a carpenter's awl lodged in his anal  
cavity.

"You can't get much more concealed than  
that," Horgan said.

The police checked their handbooks but

could not locate the chapter on how to respond  
to situations involving weapons concealed  
within a suspect's body. So they called for a fire  
engine.

Firefighters arrived on the scene and were  
brought up to speed on the situation. The police  
and firefighters came to an agreement and con-  
cluded the emergency room would be the most  
qualified to deal with the situation.

An ambulance arrived up a few minutes  
later. However, before paramedics could escort  
Sheenan into the ambulance, he offered to  
remove the awl himself.

"When he heard what they were talking  
about, he said, 'Hey, don't worry about it. I can  
do it,'" Horgan said.

Sheenan then kneeled down and proceeded

to extract a six-inch awl wrapped in electrical  
tape from his anus. Officers kept their pistols  
trained on Sheenan, aware of the awl's potential  
as a deadly weapon.

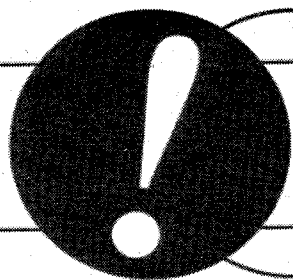
"When you're talking about an awl or an  
ice pick, and you're dealing with somebody  
who's fresh out of prison, it's a weapon. That's  
a stabbing instrument," Horgan said.

Police seized the weapon and arrested  
Sheenan, who had been released from state  
prison the week before, and then booked him  
into the county jail on suspicion of parole viola-  
tions, indecent exposure, and one felony count  
of possessing a concealed weapon.

No word on why Sheenan had an awl in his  
anus in the first place.



# features



## Improvisation, imposing stature awe show-goer

review by >> **Alexander B. Stoll**

The Granada theatre in Lawrence played host to a special concert by Buckethead, the recent replacement guitarist for Guns & Roses, and more notably, a collaborator with bass legend Les Claypool and battle-scratcher Dj Q-Bert in September.

Thankfully Axel's inevitable breakup was quick in coming, allowing for this special event titled Buckethead and Friends. His friend (yes, only one) was a musician known as "That one Guy" who played a self-created instrument that

can only be described as two bass strings on PVC pipe bejeweled with sampling pads.

Adding to his entourage was a cowboy boot with a pickup in the heel and a wood saw. Buckethead entered the stage, and immediately it becomes clear how much of an imposing figure he has. The KFC bucket, with "Funeral" taped on the bottom (he was raised in a chicken coop after all and vengeance through shredding is his business) accentuates his 6'6 stature, and his hands resemble a bunch of bananas, capable of bending his axe to their will.

The beginning of the show held the face-melting solos as anticipated, but quickly was botched by a faulty guitar pedal. Always the improviser, Buckethead picked up a rubber chicken and played its cluck while we waited for roadie repair crews. Shortly thereafter Buckethead dropkicked the head unit on his amp (in apparent revenge) and then went back, not to retrieve the head unit, but to arm himself with nunchuks and to display his agility in the martial arts. A gift-giving ceremony with cheerful background music followed, leaving several in the awkward position of forgetting to bring a Jason doll or some other mask-wearing horror figure.

Star Wars, Jason, Exorcist, Nightmare Before Christmas, and thanks to Kansas, The Wizard of Oz all were fed through his poultry plagued mind and actualized in fret-board gymnastics echoing the death squalls of his brethren. Two ripping encores into the show it ended as it only could; Buckethead, mid-shred, laid down his axe and walked off stage, signifying that the song which had expanded well beyond 20 minutes, just ended.



## Wacky instruments, catchy beat make for an album worth hearing

review by >> **Alexander B. Stoll**

While Gizmodgery may be nearing 5 years old, it has made an indention on the music scene worth revisiting.

The band, based out of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, defies their roots by creating a phenomenal concept album bent on using only toy instruments. Shitty Wal-mart-grade guitars and fisher-price keyboards have never sounded better as this electric pop-rock takes you all across the board with Doobie Brother's covers (Minute

by Minute) and countless guitar rift cameos from Queen to ELO.

This catchy album draws immediate comparisons to another fragmentary sampling artists, Beck, but with a tendency to be more rock than hip-hop. This album is worth a close listening to grasp every bleep, boom, and Elmo giggle, but sadly is fucking impossible to find, so a stab at the Internet is your best bet.

## "The Messengers"

poetic jaunt by >> **Adam Dorhauer**

The flowers of Kirksville are dying.

The scents of spring and summer past are giving way to the crisp airs of cold and death. Where soft translucence once played ambient dreams upon the minds of passers-by, stiff and shriveled corpses now stretch sharply in vain toward heaven, their ambitions crushed to hell underfoot while feathered seeds scatter searching for sanctuary, seeking escape from the sounds of their brethren crying out in mortal anguish. Quiet death buried beneath the pain of life alone remains their hope for peace. But the cruel irony of Nature allows no such shelter, for the seeds of new life are sewn of death.

Cold, heartless perpetuation of mortuary mockery surrounds us in this fleeting scene of heart-beating consciousness. The back-alley gardens of middle-America drip the stench of fading glory upon our senses until we can no longer ignore their relevance. Is there a more

urgent warning of our own precarious existence than the cries of death that fill our very streets? Stop and hear the bitter winds of remorse howling from their frostbit leaves.

Hear, and know the winds that howl are born of death. Know the winds are but the flowers themselves, an evanescent monument to their once-majestic lust. Look upon your own flesh and feel the temporal brilliance of the flowers falling into the lake of all that is lost.

We are living in a world of winter, where there is nothing but that which is soon forgotten. There is no love, no lust, no life but that which is death. There is nothing in this world that is not expressed in the biting winds that blow through our bones. Above all of this, there is no beauty. Listen to the flowers. They ache to tell the story of all that is beautiful, for they know that beauty is nothing until it is gone.

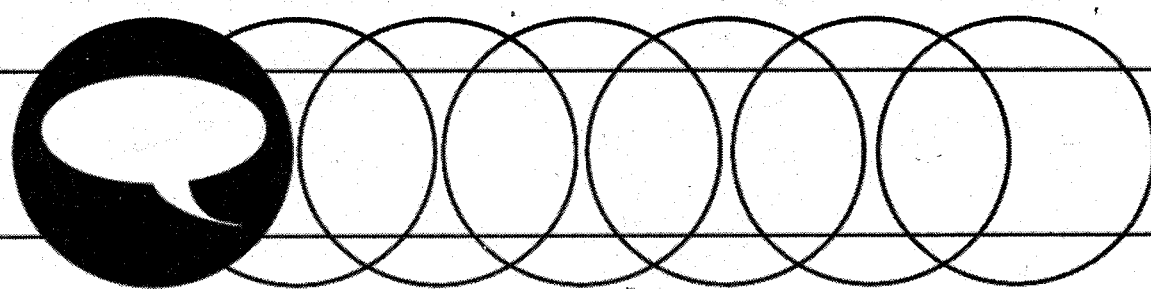
Semi-Weekly CryptoQuote, by Ben Dansby

IZRDR VF  
TBIZVTA  
OBDR IB UR  
FGVK.

Help

Example: AXVDLXD  
is JOHNSON

One letter stands for another. In this sample, X is used for the two O's, D for the two N's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each week the code letters are different.



## Group work doesn't live up to its purpose in a university setting

opinion by >> Joel Andersen

I've always been an independent person, and given the choice, I'll usually work alone rather than in a group. However, during my undergrad at Truman, many of my classes required at least one major project that involved collaboration of some sort.

These group projects always seemed to be less of a test of my ability to accomplish goals with a group and more of a test of my threshold for stupidity. Honestly, most of the groups I was put into were composed of village idiots and recent victims of severe head trauma. Without fail, there would be the guy whose monosyllabic vocabulary only branched out into the realm of multiple syllables to describe how much "be-yair" he drank last night and the girl whose severe emotional problems stemmed from that night she walked in on her father trying on her mother's wedding dress.

Sometimes if I was lucky I'd be put into a group with one or two other people who were on the level, but there was always that one piece of deadweight who never showed up to meetings or researched the area they were assigned. They knew how to work the system and will either be the future vice-presidents of cooperate America or welfare recipients. Their major contribution to society is their continued involvement in the oxygen/carbon dioxide cycle and even in that case, I'm sure they were breathing far too much of their share of oxygen. Of course, in their case, any oxygen would be too much.

Being able to pick your group members was always a slight improvement, but not by much. I like to think of it as being able to pick your firing squad. Perhaps I shouldn't be surprised that there isn't a high correlation with my friends' ability to make excellent Jello shots and their ability to make a power point presentation.

I thought things would be similar in grad

**"These group projects always seemed to be less a test of my ability to accomplish goals with a group and more of a test of my threshold for stupidity."**

school, but group work is a different type of painful now. Instead of everyone trying to shirk their responsibilities and dump all the work onto one person, everybody wants to do the project by themselves.

Perhaps it's just the nature of the Masters in Education program or grad school in general, but all the groups I've been put into are filled with various neurotic personalities who never learned their alphabet beyond the letter B, myself included. There are a few people who are still satisfied with sitting back and letting the tide take them in, but for the most part, it's less of a struggle to get people to work and more of a struggle to get people to stay in their own damn topic area and not work on my section of project.

While I may not enjoy group projects, I do think they have merit in the college curriculum. Though it goes against the very esoteric essence of a true liberal arts education, working in groups is a very practical experience in regards to the job market. Society demands cooperation on some level and group projects during college prepare us for these future experiences.

Granted, it might only prepare us for being screwed over by coworkers instead of classmates, but at least the shock won't be as traumatizing because we'll be used to it.

## War isn't pretty

opinion by >> Andrew Alexander

The idea that wars are fought with righteous intent and honorable valor is an idea that resides only in the minds of those who have never been ordered to kill or be killed. All the people who dream of being a war hero have never been faced with the horror that accompanies the title. The classical idea of a glorious war is false; there is no glory, there is no beauty, only pain and misery. Most faced with the horror of it would turn and run, tucking their tails tightly between their legs if not properly prepared, and others would run even if properly prepared. With so much death and destruction surrounding us, suffocating us, the only thing that is allowed to resonate in our mind is our determination to live, our doubt constantly beating away at our determination, and the hatred burning in our veins towards those that threaten our life. To believe that morality can be perfectly preserved in this environment is as naïve as believing that killing can be as glorious as our childhood dreams.

More and more often in the news you hear of something tragic happening in today's wars- prisoners being tortured, unarmed civilians being gunned down, or people's natural rights being taken away- yet many people still openly support these wars. Then why, when the central act of war is killing, are the very people who support these wars so drastically upset when they hear about a specific incident that involves the pain and suffering of another? If we support a war, we have no choice but to support killing and therefore someone will suffer some degree of discomfort before they die. If one is sent to war, there is a good chance they will need to kill someone in order to remain alive. If you can justify killing another for your own life, then you can justify the momentary discomfort of someone being interrogated with the potential lives the information can save.

War means one thing above all the others to the men that fight in it: to stay alive. When you are trapped in a foxhole with shards of hot molten lead falling like rain around you with only your fellow soldiers watching you back, you don't fight for your general, you don't fight for your country; you fight to stay alive. There are things that we must do in war to win, it is neither pretty nor glorious but, like killing, it must be done to insure victory. If we fail in war, all the souls who fought and died did so in vain.

Look at World War II. The things our soldiers did to captured enemy Germans and Japanese were just as shameful as the tactics used to-

day, but back then it didn't matter. We could not let them continue their siege on Europe and Asia. The Germans were convicted of war crimes for killing innocent civilians. Though our numbers and our cruelty are barely comparable, did we not drop an atomic bomb on two Japanese cities? It is still mass murder, but we justify it by saying we needed to end the war as soon as possible or more would die. Apparently destroying an entire city and contaminating the area with radioactive particles, devastating lives for generations is acceptable in certain circumstances; but torture is pushing it too far.

In the revolutionary war we were losing drastically because of our small numbers and untrained soldiers, so we started hitting the British's supply lines and ambushing their patrols; we more or less invented gorilla war tactics. This was of course simply not done in civilized war up to this point. We broke several rules that had accompanied warfare and were considered monsters by some, but we did it because we were losing and we couldn't let that happen. Yet, when we think of the Revolutionary War, we don't remember this: What we remember is the British invading our homes and burning our cities; but I ask you, are we really so different from them? Winning is possibly the most important aspect to war. Why? Because winning can justify many of the blemishes in our history books. We can forgive ourselves for dropping the atomic bomb on a civilian target; we can understand how it is necessary to break rules to when faced with our own demise. We can focus on those glorious parts in our history and quickly skip over the not-so-popular aspects of our history, such as the mistreatment of Native Americans; the slow conquer over the Hawaiian Islands, and our part in wars that were not ours to fight. The choice to enter a war is a decision that must be reached through the careful consideration of whether the end justifies the means; but as soon as you enter the war, you have no choice but accepting the means to the end and use the means that will win the war.

When this is the nature of war, don't expect people to come out unscathed, spirits to come out unbroken, and pride come out flourishing; it is an unavoidable byproduct of it that all these things are damaged. Rather, if these broken bodies and spirits cannot be justified in your mind, we probably don't have any sort of business being in that position. War is about sacrifice for something given value above the lives of those who fight in it. War is a nasty, disgusting thing and it is only useful if you believe the end product is worth fighting for, dying for, and sacrificing our morality for.

**"War means one thing above all the others to the men that fight in it: to stay alive."**

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# Paving path is probably practical

opinion by >> Sara Freeze

Everyone has seen the renovation of the buildings across the campus; from the complete inner and outer restoration of Missouri Hall to the adorning of concrete embellishments on Kirk Building. The hum of trucks can be heard throughout the day no matter where one is on campus. This beautification process is meant to bring more value and attractiveness to the campus. This leaves me to wonder: why is the path across the quad still a festering mud hole?

We have all experienced the "cow path" across the quad, many of us use it on a daily basis. It is a quick and easy way to get from one end of campus to the other. However, the path is instantly turned to mud when even the slightest of rains rolls through town, leaving many of us to use the longer paths and thus quicken our steps to get where we are going. The mud, if one has to walk across the quad within a week of the rain, is trekked across the brick walk ways and into dorms and buildings; especially Baldwin Hall whose side entrance carpet is covered in dirt no matter what the day. The mud not only makes the buildings dirty but also makes the walkways slippery and is just an injury waiting to happen.

Also, after rain, a gigantic puddle sits in front of Kirk Building for days, unable to absorb into the already moist ground. The puddle drowns out the remaining grass on the patch of land and makes an even bigger mud mess. The quad path is thus an eye sore. It never seems to be a dirt pathway but a mud slip and slide

across the campus. Rain, sleet, or snow, the dirt will be mud. Grass cannot grow on the path since so many people walk across it, trampling the grass that is there and removing the grass seed wasted on the area. Since there is no grass to absorb the water, students often walk on the grass along the side of the path to preserve their shoes from mud and still get where they need to go. Because of this, the path will only get wider and muddier if left unpaved as a result of people walking on the grass, and trampling it as the grass that came before it, to prevent muddy shoes.

The solution to this unsightly eye sore is to brick the pathway. Now the question of expense rolls into many people's minds but consider this: why waste money on grass seed that will not grow and gasoline to run the aeration machine over and over when a one time rate for bricks can be paid and never have to plant or aerate again? The cost of planting grass seed and aerating over and over again without result over the years has cost more than the bricking and if the trend of the growing path continues the cost of grass will only increase. Again, some may say, "Well grass seed is cheap so how does bricking take less money?" The grass seed being used over the years and if it is continued to be used, the cost will exceed the product putting the University at a loss. Also, paying the worker to run the aerating machine has also been a waste and thus the university is out even more money. This project also costs thousands less than the renovations to roofs that no one will notice. This pathway would not only be noticeable

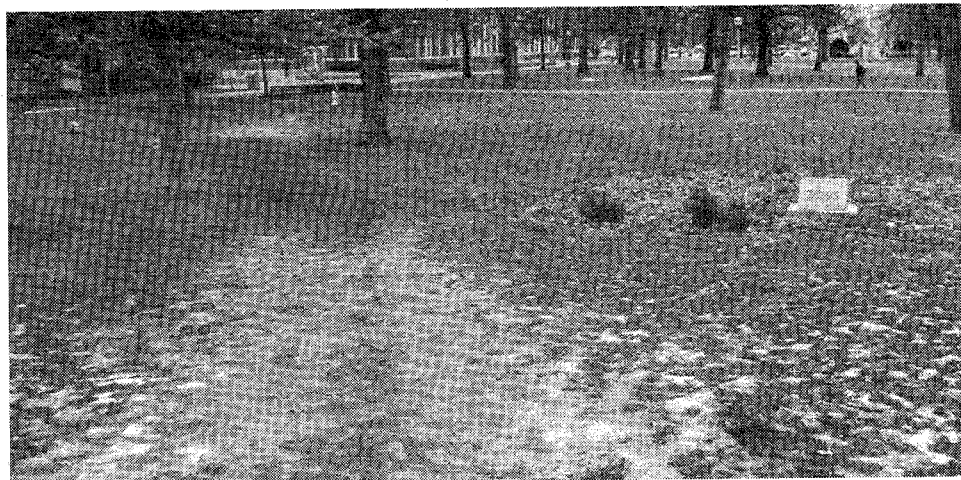


photo by >> Phelix Jarrett

but also useable. Therefore, why not brick the path?

By bricking the pathway, mud would no longer be an issue. Students could use the pathway rain, snow, or sunshine to get where they need to go quickly. Many would say, "Why not just go around and use the pathways that are already there?" Although a good question, who seriously thinks students will just stop cutting across the quad? Even if it is roped off to try and let grass grow, students like the faster way across campus, especially in the colder months, and will continue to use the dirt path.

Again a question arises, "Is it really faster to cut across the quad?" Using a pedometer, I attempted to answer this question. From the career center to the side doors of Baldwin using the pre-existing perpendiculars takes three to four minutes and is a distance of .08 miles.

Using the pathway across the quad, it makes two to three minutes at a distance of .04 miles, half the distance and time. So, why not make it a permanent path that is easy to use and looks better than a mud puddle?

So I ask you, why not brick the path? In these cold months it would take less time to get to class, thus cutting down on exposure to the cold weather. Snow or rain would not stop us from getting to class quickly and it would look so much nicer. Those of us who wear heels would no longer have to get muddy or take the long way to class. Overall, the pathway being bricked would benefit everyone by creating a mud-free and quick pathway across campus and would also fall into the beautification process that is going on throughout the campus. So I say let us lock hands and follow our red bricked path.

# Wise consuming is a political statement

opinion by >> Teresa Kerbawy

When Virginia Woolf's husband called her "the least political animal since Aristotle invented the definition," I was astounded.

Without perhaps directly commenting on the politics of the war, she exposed the issue of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Mrs. Dalloway; in *A Room of One's Own* she addressed the need for a supportive community of women-writers in order to break from the traditional canon of male-impacted writers and create an ignored fact of the human experience that is literature—the female voice. How can anyone say Virginia Woolf was not making a political statement with her work? Was not a political creature? In the case of United States citizens, (Virginia Woolf was British) Capitol Hill and the realm of the Judicial, Executive, and Legislative branches is only one political sphere, and not necessarily the most inviting to the masses. This doesn't make us any less accountable.

Every action you make is a political decision. This sounds a bit extreme, but at the heart of this message is an optimistic (and demanding) call to microcosmic political consciousness. For those of us who don't follow politics closely, who might agree that researching legislation before voting on it is the responsible thing to do, but who don't always get around to it, a responsibility to political action still ex-

ists. Politics mustn't be left to men and women in suits; politics doesn't have to be about you tracking the goings-on of this or that political candidate, naming the Minority Whip, or tracking every piece of proposed legislation that makes its way to the Senate floor. Politics is about communicating, about presenting a personal voice in a public forum. And there are many ways to do this. Virginia Woolf's voice, projected perhaps not through voting but through her writing, is only one way to affect political consciousness. We can't all write a quintessential post-war novel.

In a society where even our means of survival must be bought, spending money is an effective way to impact the government. Economics, revenues, money—whether these works excite you or send you crawling—are our society's primary method of communication. Nothing tells one society how another society is functioning like the Gross Domestic Product. So, whether or not you consider yourself political, the money you spend is a political decision. Similarly, the activities performed in each person's dorm, house, apartment, and community are strong political statements. I don't suggest we all spend money and time directly campaigning for the candidate you think is best. What I'm getting at is that time

spend doing something mindless, thoughtless, or unhealthy (while at times necessary to in order to live a sane and fulfilled life) is time *not* spent doing something more meaningful. Similarly, money spent buying food that is pre-prepared, packaged in plastic, Styrofoam, and cardboard is money ultimately *not* spent buying organic food, buying local food, or just buying in bulk.

One way to reflect on the nature of politics is to reflect on personal choice. Your choices affect the rest of the world. This position leaves the reader with an enormous amount of responsibility, but at the same time, with an enormous amount of power. Play-

ing video games, painting your toenails (mine are a shiny blue right now) and eating fast food, are all signs of a greater national consumption, but these actions are also a mainstream pastime in the more developed countries in the world and not inherently evil. The way we treat and react to these objects can verge on evil, however.

It is up to the person, especially each consumer, to make the choices that will be reflected in the GDP and other quantitative measures of action. The fact is, time spent on cosmetics, consumerism and pop culture is time *not* spent creating a compost heap or spend time touching a child's life. These decisions come back to

affect us, and if one wants proof, just watch the way dishes pile up in a kitchen if they are not washed. Eventually, there's no counter-space and you can't see the clock on the stove. While this doesn't illustrate disaster, it is a simple illustration of the way choices affect us. And we do have choices. Admittedly most of us live close enough to Ophelia Parrish, Macgruder, or even Barnett to choose between walking to campus or spending the money to buy another tank of gas. Most of us can also choose between making a quick call to the White House or a trip to the recycling center or spending that same time watching Adult Swim. And every action we do or don't do creates change, and creates the persons we are. What is a person but a compilation of his or her own actions, own attempts, even if failed ones?

I'm not suggesting that people not think while they vote, or reject TV altogether (although I don't think it's a bad idea). There is a lot to be gained from relaxation, from a good laugh, and from participation in the mainstream political process. But for those of us less inclined to that process, we are no less accountable, and no less capable of using our actions and voices to create change.

"Politics is about communicating, about presenting a personal voice in a public forum."

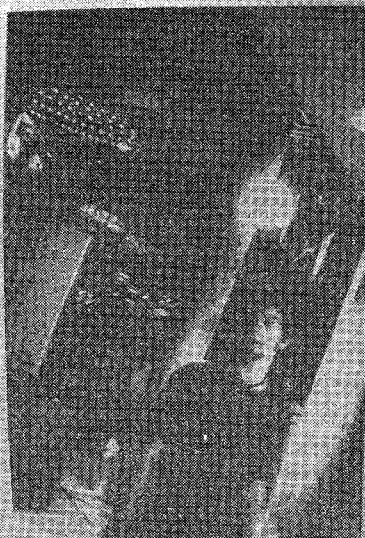


The Truman State University

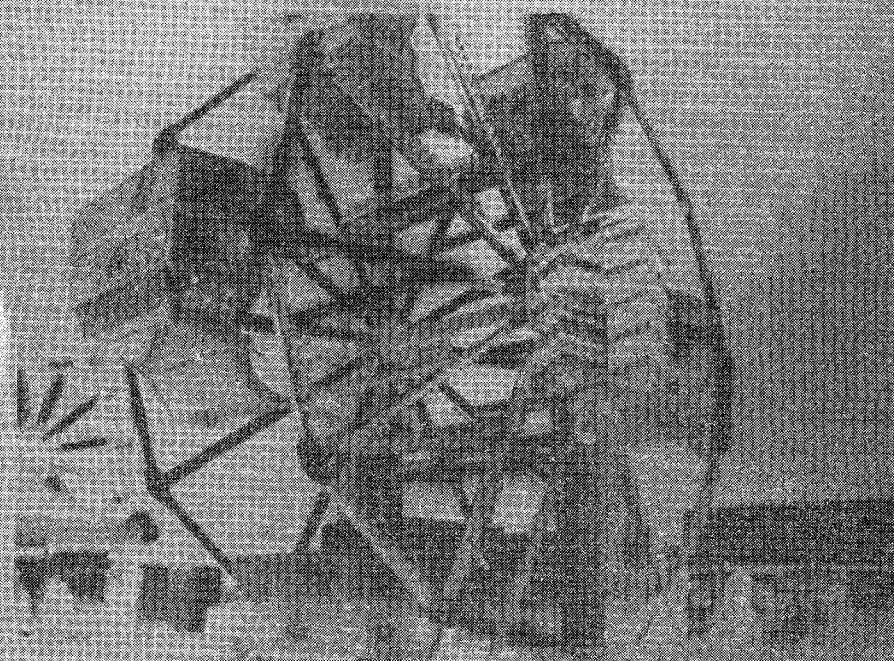
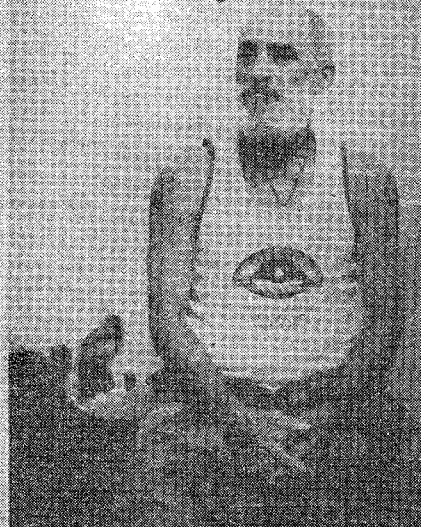
# Skindex

A Monitor Photo Mockery

LISETTE GAULKE



BRENDAN LOVLA



ERIN GUARZ

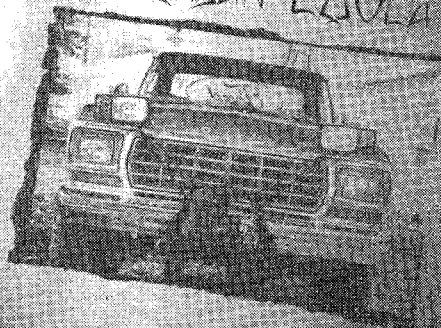
new body photo collages same subject, multiple perspectives/ exposures  
I was a happy good time





PHIL JARRETT

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## Mr. Jameson's Potluck Fiasco

short story by >> Sarah Renee Vanderwurf  
Honorable Mention

Today I am going to write my paper on Mr. Jameson's potluck fiasco. It all happened right before I turned 9 on Dec. 8th. To start with, I will tell, who is Mr. Jameson. He is the grocery store owner. His store is called Jameson General and almost every single person I know shops there, because otherwise you have to drive to the PigglyWiggly in Edina which is 45 minutes away. I know because it takes exactly one Raffi tape to get there. Mr. Jameson was very nice with a red face and a tie. His most favorite person in the world was my mom. I know because he told her every time we came to the store. I remember that he always liked to give me rootbeer Dum-Dum suckers. He always had a lot in his pocket and mom makes you eat them right away (even though rootbeer is especially gross) and say thank you. Sometimes I don't think my mom liked Mr. Jameson because one time she crouched behind the egg cooler when he walked by and told me that she was just resting her legs.

Mr. Jameson went to our church and Pastor Dean says that we are supposed to love everyone, especially people who go to our church... and the poor people. My mom says that is why I have to eat root beer suckers. My mom is the church secretary so she is especially good friends with Pastor Dean. My dad says that Pastor Dean is contrived. I think that means that he has long sermons and he tells bad stories.

Basically church is where we do everything. A lot of people go to my church named Good News Lutheran Church and the other people go to St. Mary's Catholic church across the street. There are even some people who do not go to church at all and my mom says that they are almost as bad as the Catholics.

Jamie who is my best friend is half a year older than me. Jamie and I meet every morning in the school narthex to gossip about this and that. We also have the same teacher (who is you) and my teacher gives very interesting sermons on multiplication and George Washington. One day before school, Jamie told me that Mr. Jameson had died because he had been attacked by a heart. I was sad but then I thought about no more root beer suckers and then I was a little bit happy and sad.

When I got home my dad was smiling. He said that the reason that Mr. Jameson was attacked is because he forgot to put a decimal point and had accidentally ordered 10,000 cans of family size pork and beans. My dad also said that the store would probably be closed for a while until someone else wanted to deal with that big mess of magical fruit. My mom was not happy when my dad said that. She said that I should probably just go up stairs and take a bath

because we were going to the Piggly Wiggly in the morning to get food for the funeral potluck tomorrow.

That night came the biggest snow-storm I had ever seen that year. Dad had to shovel the drive way all morning in his hat with ears. I put on my blue snow pants and made snow angels on the driveway but then my dad killed them with the shovel. All morning we waited for a snow plow to come and save us but I guess all of Minnesota had been snowed on because it didn't come until it was almost time for the funeral. When I came inside to sit by the space heater, my mom sighed and said that she would just have to make something we had at home.

At the potluck all the ladies began to set their dishes. Then everyone gasped. All the moms had brought Jell-O salad! There was green Jell-O with fruit cocktail, red Jell-O with marshmallows, yellow Jell-O with pineapple and so on and so on and so on all the way down the table.

Later my mom told me that no one had been able to go to the store so everyone made something they had in the cabinets. I guess everyone has Jell-O salad in their cabinets. Pastor Dean's wife stood up on a folding chair and asked everyone if anyone had brought anything but Jell-O. One husband told her that he had brought pork and beans. All of the men started to giggle and the wives hit them in the chests. So then we started to eat. Everyone's plates looked like jiggly rainbows. I had blue, red, green, orange and some funny clear sparkly Jell-O. I took every kind on my spoon and sucked it into my mouth. My mom started to reach for my ear when she heard someone else slurp their Jell-O. It was Mr. Alterson the president of all the church boards. Then came Mr. Vanderwilien the choir director. Then everyone started to slurp their Jell-O and laugh. Some people even mixed the different colors together so they made brown Jell-O. After we ate everyone looked a little worse for wearing. Pastor Dean looked especially very sick. I told him not to worry because God takes care of everything, even when everyone brings Jell-O. He was not a little bit amused.

After we ate the kitchen ladies took our plastic plates and spoons and washed them in the church kitchen. The men went upstairs to deal with Mr. Jameson and the ladies stayed and cleaned up. When we got home mom said that we did not have to eat the potluck leftovers and instead made the best frozen pizza. From then on everyone called that potluck the Mr. Jameson's potluck fiasco. That is the end of my paper because I have to eat dinner. We are hav-

# AND THE WINNER IS...

## Girl from the North Country

short story by >> Adam Dorhauer

"Are you sad?"

"No."

She clenched her lower jaw to control the shakiness in her breath. "You look so sad."

He didn't say anything. He stared straight ahead at the road before him and half-consciously watched the yellow stripes light up when they hit his headlights, watched them grow as they approached and zip beneath the hood of his old Buick, disappearing from view. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw her rub her eyes with the back of her finger and then again with the heel of her hand.

"Are you ok?" he asked.

"What?" The quiver in her voice was now more pronounced.

"Are you..."

"I'm fine."

The change in her voice surprised him. He looked over at her and saw only the reflection of her face in the glass of the window. The skin around her eyes was red. It struck him as strange that he hadn't seen her this way before, not in all the times she had cried to him. There was a sort of distance in her expression that almost scared him.

"Watch the road."

A faint glow appeared in the windshield as she said it, and he turned and saw the pair of headlights coming toward them. He squinted as the light flooded into the cabin. For a moment, he sat illuminated with the girl beside him. The brightness seemed to emanate from her, engulfing him with a warmth that surged through his body. It filled him, rushing like air into a vacuum. It was heaven, he thought, eternity trapped in an instant. And then the headlights vanished, and all he felt was darkness.



# Observable lives at any campus: "excitement" in outcome of a mesdemoiselles close encounter of the wrong sort!

short story by >> Larry Iles

Sometime, not long ago, not far away, a rather pompous ex-university professor pedant and former Canadian federal Liberal cabinet minister, Lucienne Robillard, declared, snortily very sanguinely. She was gladdened to be, now, a politician "tous les jours," because her former profession had been so, unchangingly, "boring"! The vignettes that, relatedly unzip à suivre, are a "fictitious" response. But they are semi-fictitious warningly only, drawing naively from research, study and teaching at well over 6 universities, Canada, France, as well as USA/UK in testing her superficiality. Indeed, one of her chief rivals, more leggy in the cute sexy sense, perhaps observably still we guys and lesbians permitted, Louise Beaudoin, met once non-biblically BIEN SUR, Monitor naughties, is now a very excitingly, successfully professor herself, whilst Robillard languishes in Opposition benches drudgery.

The over-confident elite male student, RONALD FIRESHURT, strode cockily hard as his "thing" ever, under the Truwoman Belltower timespiece with his customfary gait of ineffable self-wasp confidence. A parfait "A," grade point "A" average graduation next month, was his, TWSU-guaranteed his, in glowing attainment prospect! And the blonde sororities "sisters" all-white American laughing appreciatively at him in nearby semi-groping desires, as he shot, whoops, flipped out his wallet's "stuff" flashingly, in mock check, said surely, all! He needed: to

his fallen in with her self, most angrily on his overblown eminence selfhood behalf! Although a moment's glance, DEMOCRATICALLY, could have told him, had he been once in his selfish life so far accustomed, to note these lesser, other people's "pain" things, what!? That Mc Clay's nosebleeding profusely and fallen everywhere state of notes, désordre, showed the worst consequent wear: in aftermath, of this close encounter of the wrong sort, wasn't it, mes gens, TWSU!

As realisation, belatedly, did dawn upon would-be "Aristo," Ronald, that it was, indeed, Mc Clay who was the most vulnerably, for all peering, spying TWSU campus public to see, the most spectacularly, some would say rapingly "bloodied" by Fireshurt's Lynley Carter athleted heavy body clash, he began to go a piggish pale! Mc Clay, after all, last fortnight had "queried" his mid-term Commercial Marketing statistic grade D-MINUS "APPEAL," observing that it was a clumsy botched plagiarism of Kal Rove's internet private line posted answers, for would-be-USA Texan "PRESIDENTS GET THRU COLLEGE DUMASS" MANUAL BOOKLET! His algebra is ungrammatical, she beautifully mused as she reddened his paper.

But, alas, before our ALL USA hero dumpster could recover at least a mock semblance of "apology" in muster, up strode, collapsingly, into both, a DEAN CORSICUS HOFFBAN FREDERICQUO trippingly onto both. He, too, had been "lost" in what passed for his normal "thought." As like most such titled fatties, other than "eat" and "hunt," he had been preoccupied!! By "how" he was going to fake today's non-teaching workload. Perhaps, passing round, instead to all the authentic teachers, his latest STUDY THE OTHER SIDE OF MARS CAMPUS courses handbook NASSA had, oops, "persuaded" him, not bribed him, to promote, whilst privately he was completing, on his administrator's time, his real masterpiece, THE REFINEMENTS RULINGLY OF EMPRESS MESSALINA for Acrobatics Press, Paris CA Publications.

And as if this threesome "crash-in" was not enough for Ronald, who should be there witnessing this situation parlous but two other people unfriendly to him! One LARENTUS Pyles, columnist of a notorius left wing student journal, THE PERISCOPE, and LAREE Pyles equally astringent spouse, Dr. Bestia Dutiful, the tough grade-marker, involved unbeknown, to supposedly "sophisticate" him, a bisexual love affair with younger alluring MC CLAY, "gals-will-be-gals" at TWSU, WON'T THEY AFTER ALL these enlightenment 2007 GBLH times!

Well, the upshot of once confident Ronald's short reign of self-assured superiority, sexual as much as intellectual, is all too "exciting" for the vengeance-DULLARD seeking moralists amongst you tediously puritan dear reader MONITOR short-story-lovers! Eh oui, a private university, somewhere appropriately doing Business' STUDIES FOR REDS' in Kwani's today's communistic Hong Kong!



illustration by >> Tim Linn

The Dean was, finally, laid off! As the President got, enfin, crushed into his fat porcupine face in the accident. Enough, to render him blinded into early retirement back in Corsican and Bavarian luxury villas on his hard-working USA Massachusett's wife's real-teaching earnings. AND THE PYLES, well, they wrote up the entire "Close Encounter Gone Wrong" incident for an exclusive sale to the NATIONAL MUDLARK USA REVELRY monthly, in early retirement "scoop" fortune!

And Mc Clay you ask saddest, most apparently loneliest victim of them all, eh oui, what befell her? Well, "boringly," yes, at first instance, unfair disaster! As a quid-pro, US mistyle, for his fellow Deans agreeing "to get rid" of Corsicus Hoffban, the female TWSU "Pres." had to agree to sack Kwani. Since, sexistly, she had exposed herself as much

as an alumni donor's son to so much Pyles' ridicule, hadn't, she, ma pauvre, belle fille! And shaky USA campuses must, never, have that in OPEN ridicule as to how they DON'T actually "DO" work! But "B" rescued lovely Kwani by persuading naïve her "L" to finance an escape for ALL, ménage-à-trois, School of Peace Francophonie Etudes, in the ex-US State of Hawaii. After its US deposed Queen's descendant had been National-Assembly restored by a Brit-led army battalion of the European radical Community. AND with Kwani as the School's Mangement Director conveniently! They all lived! If "not happily" ever-after all ensemble, as both "B" and "K" groaned, poor, "L" were feminist, no-sex pray feminist perfectionists, in certain woe-is-us moodiness states, then at least, RONALD's AND CORSICUS HOFFBAN'S "Free"! Since, no males but "L" were permitted as either school board governors, or even as students. YES! As part of the conflict-resolutions, "peace" studies mission statement with Presidents Clinton, H. and Royal S. of respectively USA and France feminised honorary joint 2010 Chairwomen of the school's board. Now, of course, "how" the latter desirability came about is another "non-boring" story to satiate Madame Robillard's jaded misjudgement palate isn't it? But then herstory, ALWAYS, was an "excitingly" suppressed story of wrong encounters of the wrong sort isn't, in dialog of the living lovelinesses? ALL WORSHIP PRAY KWANI AND BESTIA, FELLAS! NO REALLY THEY ARE THE TWSU FEMME MAJORITY AND HOW, TOO!!

Thus, utterly near self-blinded in intellectual voluptuary state, to make up for an "insufficient sex life," Mc Clay tumbled, cute derriere, right up over his interrupted student walk.

"futures" confirm, in his and their adoring sun-beach planning eyes, for his assured BALLS STREET JOURNAL family brokerage career, financier ahead!

Meantime, escaping the same library beneath the T. Tower, after an early études preparation for her lectures, out walked in front of him, completely unmindful of his august thumper trajectory in her characteristically baretoed sandals, there was Assistant Professor KWANI MC CLAY. Her superbly capacious head, and impressively sculpted hair, full of the very latest you understand, mes élèves, mathematical formulae from her native Hong Kong, via a previous Arizonian private university-of-the-air Instructor misstart post. Thus, utterly near self-blinded in intellectual voluptuary state, to make up for an "insufficient sex life," Mc Clay tumbled, cute derriere, right up over his interrupted student walk. Since he had been, attention diverted, by the blondes' adoration of his male purse, hadn't he!?

"Excuse me!" he rallied and resurrected

If we had given Larry the money, what would he have spent it on?

- a. Donation to British Reform Party
- b. Bleu Cheese
- c. Danielle Steele novels
- d. Spell Check

email your answers to  
monitortrm@hotmail.com

# ...But You Can't Make Him Drink

short story by >> Richard Boggs

John Wayne's corpse disappeared from its planted place of nearly 24 years – the Pacific View Memorial Park in Newport Beach, California. Much of the local media attributed it to the growing pile of atypical celebrity grave thefts.

The Duke died on June 11, 1979.

His decaying deposits went missing November 11, 2006.

Where that corpse re-emerged is a subject of much heated debate.

Early reports indicated a corpse resembling John Wayne driving a bright baby-blue H2-Hummer down I-45 in Texas, heading toward Houston. Several other witnesses came forward to state on public record that they saw John Wayne, the deceased Hollywood star, decomposing in traffic on the New Jersey turnpike. Most discounted these reports, pointing to the absurdity of their claims. After all, the actor had died a quarter century ago.

It was like Big-Foot in Los Angeles; the Lock-Ness Monster in the Potomac. Still, reports of a walking, talking, and driving John Wayne continued to trickle in.

Then for months, nothing.

Eventually, the population turned their weary eyes away from the missing and traveling corpse. As summer ended, American citizens concentrated on primetime television and cheese-injected hotdogs.

It was September 11, 2006, when everything changed.

That morning, The New York Times broke a story that the press corporation tried to keep silent. Many were baffled; others ecstatic; some merely disappointed. The headline read, "Bin Laden Dead – Beheaded in Hiding." An excerpt of the story is as follows:

*Qandahar, Afghanistan (AP) – Leader of the Taliban and perpetrator of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York City and the Pentagon, Osama bin Laden, has been murdered and beheaded while hiding in the border city of Qandahar, Afghanistan. Little is known about the circumstances surrounding his death, however, eyewitnesses present at the time are currently in U.S. custody for questioning.*

*Only the body was found – DNA analysis identified the corpse as the terrorist mastermind.*

*"I finally have a feeling of closure, but I still miss my husband more than ever," says Shelia Williams, widow of a New York City firefighter who died at Ground Zero.*

*Reports indicate that bin Laden was conducting a high-level Al-Qaeda meeting, when an anonymous figure emerged and murdered him.*

*"If was a frickin' blood bath," says Sgt. Nelson Redding, an American soldier who helped recover the body.*

*"I was pumped," he added.*

President George W. Bush was asleep when the news hit. Once informed he celebrated as he usually does – by snapping his fingers repeatedly. Then he held a press conference.

History still had to be broadcast – live on Fox News.



photo illustration by >> Phelix Jarrett

"My fellow Americans, today I have the prestigious duty to bring to you news that will echo in infamy," he paused. Cleared his throat. Adjusted his crotch. "Internationally known tear-or-ist, and leader of the dreaded and scary Taliban, Osama bin Laden, has been killed. Today his soul sits next to Adolph Hitler and Timothy Leary in the molten depths of Satan's sanitarium. He will torment our great people no longer."

Uneasy and shaking, the president should have looked happier. He knew better than to fuck up a moment like this.

"However, this is but a milestone in The Long War, which boldly persists, thanks to the men and women of the armed forces. I command..."

"You command shit, son."

Interrupted, the president had no clue how to respond. He merely focused his shifty eyes upon the figure which loomed over the members of the press. He is large, the president thought. I'll need the SS to win this, he concluded.

Wearing a tea-tinted 12-gallon and shrouded in shadow, the figure loomed forward toward the president, pushing past the junkie journalists. The president whispered into a closed circuit microphone.

"Go! Go! Go! Go!" The secret service swarmed.

Lifting his left arm, the misplaced marauder fired a total of three times, hitting every service man in sight. Smoke poured from the barrel of his six-shooter. Blood dashed the green ground. Quickly, the gunman spun to hit a couple more sharp-shooters aiming from behind. Out of rounds. Reload.

Ducked and struggling to straighten his hair, the president peeked around the podium.

The scene was vacant, since most had escaped during the shoot-out. Was I all alone?

Bush could see the face of the assailant. Hidden under the cowboy hat was a pea-green face with cheeks that jostled and pulsed as the figure pushed forward, closing in on the president.

He is after me, the president finally realized.

Bush's eyes locked with his pursuer. The stranger had penetrating eyes of fire, burning into the Commander In Chief's malnourished soul. Closer, and closer still he moved, but Bush was utterly paralyzed. Fear! He can smell my fear.

"Step up, you yellow-bellied carpet bagger. I've come to do some politikin'," the stranger scowled in a vaguely southern drawl.

Bush recognized the voice from his childhood. The president's body loosened as a sense of ease overtook him. He stood.

What he saw baffled him – as did most things in life.

Before him stood John Wayne, in full waking life. In his left hand was a steaming revolver; his right grasped something resembling a bulbous potato sack dripping burgundy to the earth. Despite his detrimental decay, the Duke lurched further still.

"Have you been sent by God to kill me?" the president croaked.

"No. I've come to deliver yur a present."

John Wayne secured the revolver on his cocked hip, and slung the sack at Bush's tangled feet. It hit with a heavy sound – the sound of densely packed creamed corn creeping out of a can and onto the floor. Dribble and splat.

The president wrinkled his nose as he reached for the prize. His fingers feebly moved

about the object. He tepidly glanced inside.

Bush winced and looked toward Wayne for approval.

"That's right. I did what you and yours couldn't." The Duke cocked his head toward the blazing Washington sun and spit. "Take it out. Git your hands dirty."

Bush shook at this command. He froze.

"Don't make me use force, Bushy boy."

Blood pooled in growing amounts around the potato sack. The president knelt at its side, his knees soaking in Arabian plasma. Inch by mother-loving-inch, he reached into the sack, his fingers touched what felt like cold chicken broth soaking in uncooked hamburger. An unloving dish, to say the very least.

Clench and tug. Tug and release.

The fleshy, bearded brown ball that was Bin Laden's head bounced into Bush's bloody hands. This is the closest he's ever been to anything that was once living and is now deceased. His nemesis, the terrorist.

"Stunning. Isn't it, Mr. President? That could have easily been your head in that burlap sack. The lesson ain't over. Hold the souvenir over your head. Do it," the deceased actor commanded.

"I... I just don't understand."

"Let's face it, George, there ain't a lot you do know. Do as I say. Hold his head over yours." He paused thoughtfully and added, "like a sacrifice."

With his lower legs soaking in blood, the beleaguered world leader lifted the fool's cranium to the sun. Blood ran fluidly down Bush's arms and dripped, dripped, dripped onto his twisted forehead.

"Well, what have we learned here today, Mr. President?"



# Slap to Branding Nunchaka

short story by >> Ben Dansby

You are walking down a staircase. It is an enclosed, spiral staircase. Aside from the occasional torch lining the smooth stone of the curved walls, you are in complete darkness. You try to think: why am I here? how did I get here? The answers to these questions crawl just above the surface of your confusion. Despite this, you continue descending the staircase. You feel compelled to do so, as if some force or power entirely independent of your own will is beckoning you onward.

You walk for what seem like hours. By now, your eyes have become well adjusted to the darkness. The stone walls are made from precision-cut granite blocks stacked one on top of another for what seems like infinity. You wonder who could have built such an edifice, this stone staircase. A race of giants? Untold multitudes of human slaves? Or was it simply manifested out of nothing by a sorcerer or wizard? For what purpose? Is it really endless? So it would seem. As you look around while continuing to walk, you suspect it must be magic. That, or an incredibly well-trained janitorial crew. There are no spider webs. There is no dust. No crumbling blocks. The rare torches are all burning with fresh pitch. Well-maintained, definitely. But through effort or through force of will?

You find it strange that you have been walking for hours, and yet you do not feel tired, or sleepy, or hungry, or thirsty. You wouldn't say that you feel great, after all, you're still worried about what's going on, plus it is a little cold, but you certainly feel adequate. Bored, though. You're most definitely bored. Due to the preternaturally well-kempt quality of the stairs, there is not much to look at and not much to occupy your time. You tried singing an hour or so ago, but quickly stopped. Your voice sounded small and weak, and the stone walls gave off a ghostly reverberation.

You would like to imagine that you must be thousands of feet below the surface of the earth by now, but you're not so sure that wherever this is goes by such limited laws of dimensionality. Another thought occurs to you: perhaps this isn't on earth at all. Perhaps I'm on another planet, in the same solar system, a different solar system, the same galaxy, a galaxy hundreds of trillions of light years away. Or maybe I'm not on a planet at all. Perhaps this staircase can be seen as an impossibly long cylinder hurtling through deep space. Through deep space, on a journey somewhere, or maybe to nowhere. Maybe this staircase is just intergalactic junk that is destined to be captured by the pull of some sun's gravity and incinerated into nothingness, me included. Or maybe, just maybe, I'm not alone. Maybe there's someone descending the staircase a thousand steps in front of me and a thousand steps behind me? Or maybe I'm the only person on this staircase, but there's a thousand more, all connected in a honeycomb-like fashion, with each one containing someone like me, confused and scared and more than a little exhilarated?

You push these thoughts out of your mind. And then, the staircase starts going up.

No, that's not right. Because there's another person in front of you. And it's you. Yourself. You wave your right hand, the other you waves the left hand. A mirror. Luckily, you were fairly near a torch, otherwise you might have walked directly into it. Endless twisting downward stairs, then, abruptly, a mirror that extends across the length of the next stair beneath you. Looking up, you see that the mirror is about seven feet tall. Interesting. You feel a small thrill over the fact that the monotony has ended. You think: finally, a new inexplicable force to contend with!

You sit staring at yourself and the stairs in front of you going up that are actually behind you going down. Of course, you realize, there is no 'up' and 'down' direction for stairs. Whether stairs go up or down depends entirely on the stair walker's present direction of locomotion. And in the event that the stairs really are floating space debris, up could be down, or right could be diagonal.

You continue staring at yourself. Eventually, you get the notion that the person staring back at you is really someone who looks kind of like you in dim light, and who is trapped in a not-so-endless-anymore staircase. You say hi to the person in front of you. Shockingly, that person says hi back at the exact same moment. You begin to feel a deep connection to this apparition/person. You want to reach out and touch your soulmate, make sure that what you're seeing is real. You extend your hand to your impersonator. The impersonator does the same. When your fingers and your soulmate's fingers touch, you feel nothing. You continue reaching out. The goal is to lay your hand on your double's shoulder. You're almost there. Then, you feel a hand grasping your shoulder. You look back. A hand and forearm floating in mid-air has you in its grasp. You begin to panic. This was all somewhat benignly fascinating until now. Now it's creepy.

You withdraw your hand from the shoulder of the person in front of you. As you do so, the hand on your shoulder releases its grip on you. You look back just in time to see it retreat backward and disappear. Now you're suspicious. Keeping your gaze behind you, you again extend your hand to what you once thought was a mirror, then a you impersonator, and now gods-know-what. The ghost hand pops into existence and begins reaching for you. Draw your hand back. Ghost hand does the same.

You're pretty sure that you've figured it out. The "mirror" in front of you is somehow a portal to...a foot behind you. You suddenly start to get very angry. You think: whatever god has constructed this place has mastered the physics of teleports or wormholes or whatever and he/she/it is using it to transfer things a foot backward?! The motives of your [captor] make no sense to you. But then, nothing about this makes any sense to you.

You make a decision. You'll walk into the "mirror" all the way. You know what will happen, but you're going to do it anyway. You take a deep breath and step forward. You stick your head through the teleport. Weird, you think, as you look at your own back with your head thrust forward. Somewhat confusedly, as you are now two separate entities, you continue walking. As expected, you take a step onto the granite floor a few inches behind where you entered the portal.

Now you decide to do another experi-

ment. You walk backward into the portal and see your backside materialize out of nowhere, then find yourself staring up the stairs you had made your endless journey on, gods know how long ago.

Well, this all very fascinating, but it does me no good in making progress to an exit or some sort of conclusion. Then several truly frightening thoughts enter your addled brain. What if there is no way out? What if there is no grand design or overseer here? What if this is a construction project abandoned or simply a bizarre random manifestation of reality/pre-reality. It occurs to you that if any of these thoughts pan out, you will be stuck here forever. And if your current physical condition, that is, without fatigue or hunger, holds up, then you won't even have the dignity of starving to death or burning up in a star. Instead, you'll be here,

The "mirror" in front of you  
is somehow a portal to...a  
foot behind you.

forever. Eternity. No escape, not a single god-damned thing you can do.

After rather uncomfortably sprawling across four stone steps in utter desperation for a few minutes (or possibly days), you get up. You turn away from the portal/mirror and begin waling back up the way you came. After a few steps, you reach the torch that you once thought had saved you from walking directly into a mirror. You look at the torch. The flames. Something very strange about them. After staring intently at the flickering flame for about half an hour (though you figure concepts of time are pretty much as ashes "in" this "place"), you come to a realization: the flame is on a loop. The same patterns of movement keep repeating themselves every few seconds. And not similar movements. The exact same movements.

You place your hand near the looping "torch." It's giving off heat. Still, you're curious. You edge your hand closer. Closer. Stop. Your hand is in the midst of the chromosphere of the flame. You still feel the heat, but it's not the scalding blaze you'd expect from your hand being ensconced in flame.

You withdraw your hand from the flame and grasp the wooden handhold of the torch that is resting in a looped metal sconce attached to the granite wall. You now have the torch in your hand. You wave it about like an explorer trying to scare away approaching wolves. The flame remains erect and upright, not responding to the motion being inflicted upon it.

You are now convinced: the flame is a hologram. Or something like it. A ripple of anger courses through you as you are again struck by the false and wrong nature of this place. Then the anger is replaced by bemusement. Perhaps this faux flame can be used to your advantage.

You return to the portal. Torch still in hand, you watch yourself extend the flame toward the "mirror." The flame is reflected. Good. You stick the flame through the threshold. You look behind you. No flame winking into existence. You have time to think excellent! Before the portal starts shimmering. You keep the torch submerged in the portal. The shimmering grows brighter and more violent. Soon

your reflection begins blinking on and off and you catch glimpses of the continuation of stairs before you. Finally, the mirror blinks off and stays off. You are left holding the torch out, which illuminates your new path. Great. More stairs. At least I'll have a constant light source this time. Why didn't I think of taking one of the torches before?

Before you continue on your endless journey down the stone stairs, you take a moment to reflect on your success. You knew the flame wasn't really there. The mirror saw the flame and thought it was there. When you attempted to teleport it, the portal couldn't teleport something that wasn't there. It saw something that could be teleported, and yet it wasn't there. The schism caused the portal to break down or turn off. This occurrence gives you new hope that there is an end or conclusion to this place. After all, you think, things like that don't happen on accident (you ignore the voice in your head that says things like that don't happen at all.). It was a test!

You travel round the bend of the curved staircase and are immediately rewarded

rat in a maze yet again. The staircase ends, and this time not by some improbability of science/sorcery, but a door. A good, honest door with brass hinges and peeling, off-white paint. Your heart leaps with joy. Surely you must be approaching your journey's end.

You grab the cool metal knob and turn. The door swings inward to reveal a long, narrow corridor. Moth-eaten tapestries line the walls. You blink. The tapestries are gone. The walls are now bare stone. Torches run shoulder-length along the wall.

You walk down the corridor. Your steps are at first cautious, then confident. In the distance, you see another door, growing larger with each passing step. Without incident, you reach the door and open it. Another long corridor. No tapestries. Blink. Tapestries. You look behind you. Instead of seeing the long corridor you just walked through, you're staring at the stone steps you came down on.

You groan. More tricks. Tests. Whatever they are. Just for kicks (or perhaps in lieu of any better ideas), you again walk the length of the corridor. Open the door. Back at the entrance. Once again, you walk the hall. You open the door at the end, and this time you leave it ajar. You run back to the exit to the stone steps and open that door. Now both doors are ajar. You run back to the other door and pass through the threshold. You lose your footing and trip. When you land, you find yourself in a small, circular room. Scratch that. Octagonal room. On each side is a lever.

You walk over to one. You pull it. As if from a distance, you hear stone moving, like if an Egyptian slave were pushing a block to be added to the construction of a pyramid. Nothing else happens.

You walk over to another lever. You pull it. Nothing happens. Or does it? You smell a faint odor of sulfur.

You walk over to a third lever. You pull it. You hear clanging metal and the whoosh of air above you. You look up in time to see a huge metal block hurtling toward you. You open your mouth to scream, but your brain has just sent the signal to your mouth to open when the block hits.

You are dead.

# MY BACK PAGES...

please & thank you!  
ahugemanatee@gmail.com

once drunk

like God's undeniable presence your shadow  
it seems to be following me but  
when i'm feeling lonely  
I pretend you've dyed your hair black  
& now slowly stalk me  
even when I close my eyes to sleep alone

-asbury townsend

Der Abbruch

his eyelids burn tentacled red  
underneath the stadium lights  
white fibrous dream  
bandages unravel  
to reveal a cartigram of purpling green  
between shoulderblade continents  
the plebeians roar

the arena quakes below  
Rocking the needling waters of the broken glass caldera  
each stroke is madstabbing agony  
Flaming magma ashwrapping

he stands a blood-scaled dinosaur  
Scans the clear-toothed horizon  
Scouting thru misted pain  
for cooling lighthouse

Fly!  
through the fog  
through endless twig-whip sanities, Diving  
through his shredded ribs, lost fingers  
to the wall, past the crowd,  
into the dead lover night

his head is an octopus  
Wraps back the bandages—batter on fried crappie  
and without ceremony  
Sews shut his mouth

-Chester Nay

Bite-Sized Love

I despise you.  
You are a horde of bees swarming my skull,  
always taunting, never stinging,  
and building your hive in my brain.

Away with you!  
Sleeping into my soul like a grotesque apparition,  
a vile pestilence, ruthless,  
haunting and unwieldy.

You must die to Me.  
Your secret is not safe with Me.  
You may have won me over,  
but I will win Me back,  
and I will fight to kill you  
all the days of my life.

-Westin Oakes

1.  
The pitter-patter  
of wet purple leaves  
falling like birthmarks on your head  
With one eye closed  
you winked and stared

2.  
In a spiny row,  
Spineless little cockleshells  
Drip wholly bone dry

-Zia Luchrman

I have come here today to confess something before you all

I am War  
I have seized cities and countries  
I have massacred millions  
I have mutilated and slaughtered children  
I have razed villages  
I have raped women  
I have tortured souls  
I have spawned hatred  
I have torn families apart  
I have destroyed homes  
I have traumatized many  
I have come here today to confess something before you all.  
I am guilty of ignorance, hatred, greed, power, stupidity, and my existence.

-Anonymous

Bits of Sight and Other Things

A man flips a switch and the darkness  
hides itself from the light of his eyes,  
tucking itself away in the corners of the room  
and holding out till the switch points down again  
or the man shuts his eyes.

Manners are everything, manners for this, manners for that,  
and the darkness would be considered "polite,"  
or at least doing what it was told to, apart from the everyday mishap.

A shudder down a spine, a hair stood on end—  
signs, or rather, effects of a rude bit of darkness,  
hopefully just one that didn't notice what time of day it was,  
or was too tired to move quickly.

Then what is light when it shouldn't be?  
Rude. Boisterous. Blinding.  
No light should be where it shouldn't and no darkness either,  
but neither are ruler, it seems, just cohabitators—  
trying desperately to be courteous to one another and their world's  
inhabitants.

-Ben Jordan

in the dark

in the dark  
people change.  
timid hands become bold,  
making moves that would surprise the sun.  
words are released,  
free from careful, controlling minds.  
confessions are made,  
replacing the priest with the subject.  
faces remain calm,  
that routine flush at somethings like that.  
bodies are closer,  
on couches, in beds.  
in the dark  
people change.

-hazel green

Corner Pocket

Sleet pattered  
the aluminum roof  
of J.C.'s tavern  
like a million  
crooning crickets  
playing their tiny  
timpani drums.

Wallace, a proud  
but stupid man  
in his golden years,  
between the green  
years and the grey,  
played a match  
of pool with himself

like he always did  
on autumn nights  
when the pond had  
frozen over so he  
couldn't fish. But  
seeing his breath in  
beams of moonlight

made him smile  
more than memories  
of reeling in a week's  
worth of supper,  
but not even that  
compared to sinking  
a little colored ball.

He chalked up  
the tip, aimed down  
the cue, and frowned.  
Rolling the blue two  
just a little bit  
to the right, he  
called corner pocket.

-Nick Wilsey