

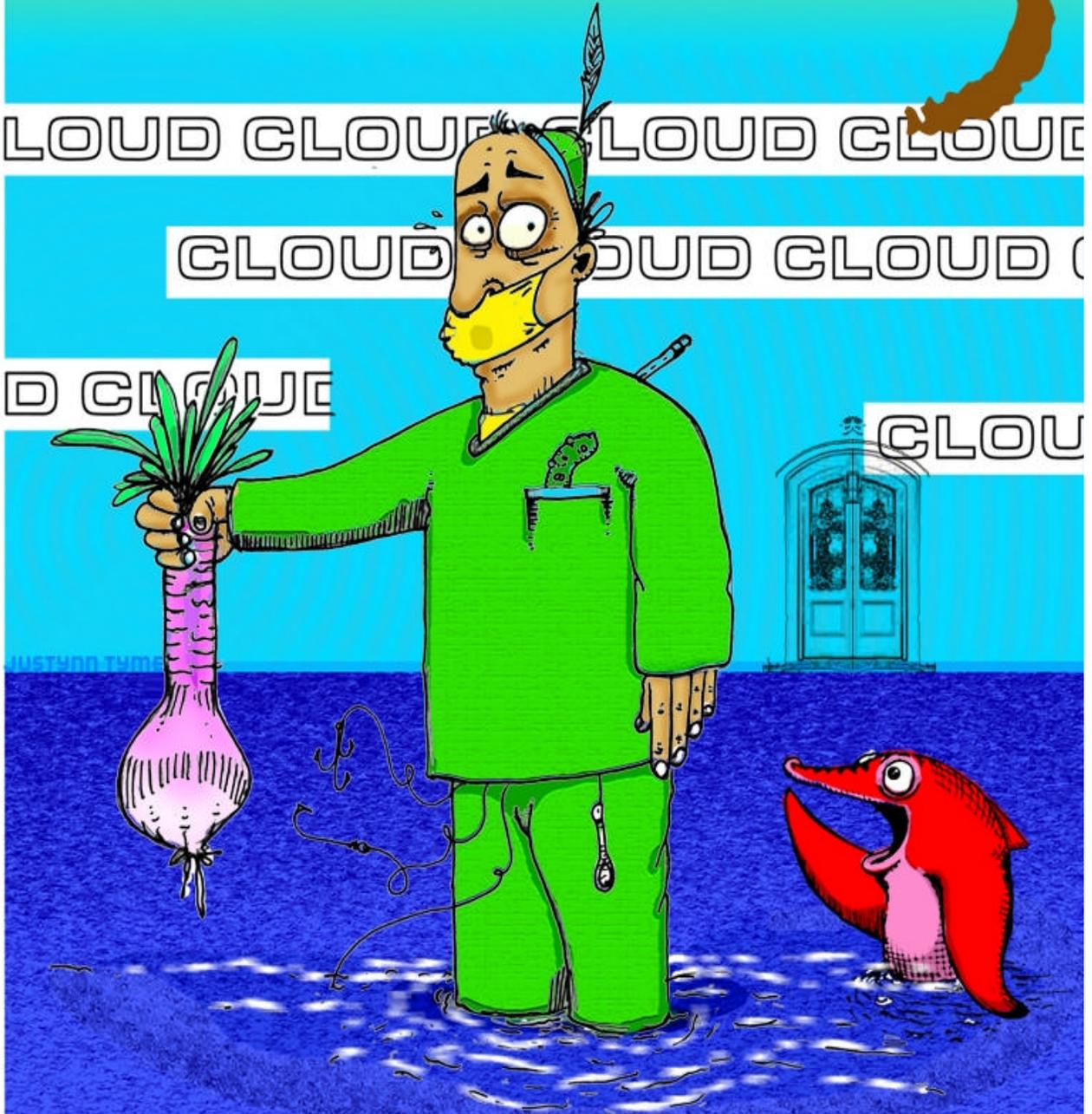
THE NEW ABSURDIST ANTHOLOGY 3

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TNA ANTHOLOGY

3

The New Absurdist

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Plethora
Christian

The word slithered off her tongue without effort. Perhaps she hadn't said it. But It sounded just like her. P-L-E-T-H-O-R-A. The word curled up into the creases and folds of my brain, like hot tub water on sore limbs.

"I just don't know."

My indecision was blistering. Her eyes were swinging green lanterns. She was water. Smoke. She covered everything I could see. I had created something between us that could not be stopped. Something that could not be more complicated. Smashing pumpkins crashed in waves through my eardrums. Love is suicide.

"Everyone thinks you're a whore."

I meant to tell her how I felt. How my body rippled and rolled when I imagined her. I meant to ask about how the hell her skin was always so soft, her hair so perfect. But the inflection was all wrong.

"Everyone? Who is this everyone? I have a word or two for them!"

Her face was constantly changing, making it hard to focus correctly on the

words. I heard what she'd said, but it took too long to arrange all the consonants and vowels. The letters spilled out from between her lips like bowls of steamed shrimp. Her voice was so warm and soothing. She reached out for my hand.

"Under stan da ble", came her explanation. Stumbling out of her mouth like a loaded late night barfly.

The cafe was nearly empty now. Her movements blossomed without control. She exploded with color and fragrance. She stared at me like a masterpiece, one of the discarded sketches beneath her apartment windows. I tilted my head away from her. She seemed to gain better perspective. She blew holes through my face like shooting stars. My cheeks felt sun burnt.

"Can I touch you?"

I was drunk with want. She could be a whore. She could be a god or princess or high-ranking official. What the hell did I care? I positioned myself to relieve her of her clothing. Her soul. Her insides. Nipples. Spit. Leather. Wallpaper crawled down to dusty floors. I wanted to scream but I was terrified. She caressed the bottle. Stroking its length. Long pink fingers slipping up to the head.

"Clamp"

Ant. Shaft. Cock. What the hell had she said? I needed to focus. Taking long drinks from my cup, I felt inhuman, inadequate, I asked where the fucking waitress went off to. Her teeth like mantis jaws. clip. clip. clip. I dropped my hands to my side. I felt like something a dog would cough up.

"You can touch me... If you can relax. Let's go back to my place, baby.."

Her words were shattering glass. Sharp. Red. Insane. My body jerked violently as a plethora of clamps snapped my rib-bones and ankles in the hot tub. I woke and it was still dark out. The stars were hanging above me like electronic puppets. Steam followed me around while I waded through tall grass and past invisible hedges.

I felt lost in my own black yard. I felt lost for the rest of my life.

Reflective Reflex

littoralis

She lived in a tiny world but -- although she didn't know it -- she herself was far from tiny. Not in size but in stature. Her body was tiny and so required tiny clothing. She wore tiny shirts, a tiny bra, tiny jeans, and very tiny panties. Her tiny socks went well with her tiny shoes and the tiny jewelry she wore didn't clash with her tiny clothes. She was a tiny girl but much larger than one might think.

When she arrived to the door of her tiny house she went in and took off her tiny clothes, including her tiny bra and very tiny panties, then stood in front of her tiny mirror, which was large enough to see her tiny body in. "Fuck," she said, in near disgust, "I really am tiny."

Not that she was surprised, since she knew she had been tiny all her life. It was just that the mirror's revelation smacked her tiny face. She was a tiny girl in a tiny world. There was no place for her except the world she was in.

Disturbed

offbeatjim wittenberg

The monster said, "I don't enjoy wearing a crowd like a coat." So you drove the car out to the country to a pond where you went skinny-dipping. You were afraid something cold and evil was hiding beneath the surface of the water and waiting to pull you under.

You finally left at sunset. A black pickup truck with tinted windows intimidated the two of you because it kept running up and down the road with its headlights off. You ran to a ditch to hide, but the monster overran it and left a piece of his leg on a barbwire fence.

The next day you drove back out, but this time you took your small brother. He annoyed the monster by constantly repeating, "Let's kill the frogs."

You saw the wound on the monster's leg and said, "You need stitches." He shrugged, but later lied and told people, "I got this scar in a knife fight."

The police pulled the car over when you got back to town that evening. It matched the description of a vehicle driven by an alleged murderer. As you were being questioned you wondered why they didn't ask, "How come you have two heads?" You would have replied, "I regularly eat psilocybin."

You were pleased that the monster told them you weren't a criminal. Yet, it disturbed you when he said, "He listens to way too much heavy metal."

Parasite

curt

Some nights, the heat was nearly unbearable. The soft wet walls were dense, and when there was no breeze filtering between the bony columns, it was much like a sauna. Sweat would tickle my spine as it rolled straight down, making a stream that passes through the shoulder blade plateaus. A puddle of collected sweat would form behind me on the rotting floor where I'd sit and meditate. Breathing in deeply through my nostrils, the scent of the flesh-cave always made my mantra of *death is life* more meaningful. Parting my lips on the exhale, the coppery tang of blood in the spoilt air would touch my tongue. Attempting to remain in a meditative state for a considerable part of the night, I'd ignore that sensation as it tried to seduce me, the tip of my tongue being pricked with that metallic flavor twice a minute. The meditation was so necessary; slowing the breathing and the heartbeat was just about the only thing that saved my mental faculties during those hot, still nights in this self-inflicted prison.

But a man can only stand as much as he can stand. My mantra would begin to be interrupted with a nagging compulsion to eat...to fuck... This is when I would ignore the discomfort by another means of distraction. My stomach growled as my eyelids parted, and the red meat of the cave filled my scope of vision. Hot, stinky flesh covered the entire interior. Standing, stretching, then stepping over to a wall made of thick rotten tissue, I awoke fully and welcomed the adrenalin as I thrust my clenched fist into it. I was forearm deep inside it, and I immediately felt my cock twitch.

Pulling out, listening to the sound of the meat sucking at my arm, I dug my fingers into the lip of the hold I'd just made. Ripping off a piece of the wall, I dangled it in front of my eyes before my tongue lashed out and grabbed it, like a chameleon might snatch a bug with its sticky projection. The taste of the raw stale meat was like a drug to me- and after that first taste it was only a moment later before I'd smash my face into the dripping rancid wall and rip out big hunks of it. I'd swallow like a beast, without chewing at all. The greasy flesh easily slid down my throat. I'd pause to take a breath, and then go back at it, gnawing and ripping at the huge carcass.

My feeding frenzy was heightened as my now-engorged prick started to break its way into the meat, my hips bucking, carving out a hole to satiate its lusty appetite. The flesh itself wasn't hot, like a living orifice, but with every new rip made or hole torn out, it would ooze a fatty dribble that was perfect fucklube. My mouth sucked and licked at it while my cock drilled deeply, using all that secreted disgust to saw back and forth inside it. My nostrils would be filled with bloody bits and I'd have to stop eating, so I could pant heavily through my wide-open mouth while I fucked my host. The climax would come quickly, and my semen would end up dripping out of the do-it-yourself orifice just like the snotty slime that dripped from it before I penetrated it, raped it. Day after day, locked in the giant decaying chest cavity, nothing ever changed. Once my crave was satisfied, again I would sit and hear the mantra in my unquiet mind.

The Pants We Choose

M. Sunrich

For reasons that were not entirely clear to me, I went to work for a company that manufactured men's trousers.

Prior to taking the job, I knew nothing whatsoever about the garment industry. I had never even thought about it. Working in a pants factory is not the sort of career to which people aspire. No child sits on the playground flipping through department store catalogues, pondering the historical significance of slacks.

Oddly enough, the factory was located in the heart of the downtown area, only two blocks from the museum. I thought this must have violated some sort of zoning protocol, but my assessment was based completely on conjecture. People are always rambling on in this manner, about what's a law and what isn't, but few are willing to actually *read* the law books. The information is out there and freely available, sure, but it's so monumentally boring that reading it might result in an aneurysm. People know this.

I expected to go in there and find rows of sewing machines and conveyor belts, but this was not the case. Instead, the place was filled with ten-foot-high, dull-gray machines covered in levers and blinking lights. The machines stood flush with one another in a labyrinthine pattern that extended for a hundred yards or so in every direction.

Some workers pushed huge carts of cotton, thread, and other raw materials; others pushed carts stacked with finished trousers. The machine operators climbed ladders to drop the raw materials into the hoppers on the tops of the machines. The finished pants would then emerge at the bottom from between two metal rollers. Adjusting the levers determined the size and color of the trousers.

The supervisor assigned me a machine and showed me how to operate it. He had clearly given exactly the same instructional session (if such it could be called) more times than he was willing to contemplate, and he lacked the creativity to change it up. I was going to ask him a question, but he was gone before I could speak.

I stared blankly at the contraption, with its disconcerting array of levers and lights, and then at the cart of raw materials that someone had left for me. I measured out the required amounts, climbed the ladder, and dropped them into the hopper. The machine hummed to life and initiated the inscrutable trouser-creation process. It sounded as if the materials were being chewed up by huge iron jaws, and, for all I knew, they were. I descended just about the time that a pair of pants was coming out. I folded them neatly and placed them in the basket on the bottom of the cart as I had been instructed.

The guy frenetically working on the machine next to mine wore green coveralls and had his head and hands wrapped in bandages. He moved from one area of the machine to another with robot-like precision. He seemed to work with a degree of pride that I found wholly inappropriate.

“Excuse me,” I said.

“Yeah?” he replied without looking.

“Um, the supervisor neglected to tell me how many of each size and color to make.”

“That’s entirely up to you.”

“It is?”

“Yeah.”

“That doesn’t make a lot of sense.”

“It doesn’t have to. That’s just the way it works.”

“I’m not sure that I’m comfortable with that level of responsibility.”

“Listen, I’m really busy here.”

I walked back to my machine and decided that I was only going to make plaid XXXXL trousers.

Things went fairly well and without incident for the next three months. It was monotonous work, certainly, but the pay was decent, and there was never any mandatory overtime or anything like that. I developed a much greater appreciation for the artwork of Marcel Duchamp, in any event.

One day my machine was churning out another enormous pair of trousers when I heard a strange sound. All of the machine operators and cart pushers in my vicinity, including the “mummy,” had stopped in the middle of their tasks and were gazing at the ceiling. I looked up and saw a large piece of machinery plummeting right toward me. I leapt out of the way just in time, and the falling object exploded as it hit the floor, scattering tubes and wires.

I stared at the broken metal husk and then turned my eyes to the ceiling in search of its origin. I couldn’t tell from whence it had come. I realized, however, that I wasn’t as unsettled by the incident as I should have been. No one asked if I was all right; they just returned to their work. I couldn’t blame them. Getting involved is usually a mistake.

A few minutes later, the supervisor came and got me and took me to his office.

“On behalf of the company, I wish to apologize for that unfortunate incident.”

“It’s okay, really.”

“Perhaps you’d be happier in our retail division,” he said, looking around nervously. “The salary is usually lower, but in this case we’re willing to offer you the same rate of pay.”

“Sure,” I replied.

They drafted me a check for the rest of the week and told me to go home. They must have really been concerned that I was going to press charges. I had no such intentions, but I was not going to argue with a free vacation.

The following Monday I reported to the nearest retail outlet. The outlet in question was twenty blocks west. It was called Slack Attack. I stood on the sidewalk in front of the store, squeezing the handle of my lunchbox while staring at the sign in disbelief. I was not looking forward to having to tell people where I worked. I decided that I was going to have to lie in those situations.

After several days it became clear that Slack Attack was not one of the company’s higher-volume establishments. In a given day I would see maybe two customers. I had no idea why they kept the place open. It wasn’t like a car dealership, where it was considered profitable to sell only a few vehicles a week. I was the only person on duty during my shift, and it was insanely dull, but I found ways to pass the time.

One day, about a month after I started, a gentleman entered the store and began leafing through the corduroy. I usually didn’t pay much attention to our patrons, but something about him intrigued me. He wore a trench coat and a hat that obscured his face. He browsed around for almost half an hour before I formulated the notion that he was not really interested in the pants at all. He left without a word ten minutes later.

The next day he came back at the same time. He wandered around the store as before, fingering the trousers. I watched him from behind my paperback, but he seemed not to notice. He left thirty-eight minutes later. He repeated this same routine for seven straight days. Each day I observed him and resolved that I was going to say something to him, but I never did.

On the eighth day he entered as usual but broke his routine and headed straight for the register. He stopped in front of me and removed his hat. I had never managed to get a good look at his face before. It was obvious that he had been decomposing for quite some time. The flesh that remained was blackened and desiccated, and his eye sockets were vacant. What hair remained was clotted with mud and twigs.

“Are you acquainted with the many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics?” he asked.

I shook my head.

“Basically, it states that when an event occurs for which there can be several possible outcomes, whichever outcome transpires in our world is played out here, and all of the other possible outcomes are played out in other dimensions.”

I just stared, but I’m sure my eyebrows must have involuntarily conveyed some cryptic message.

“I suppose you’re wondering what this has to do with anything.”

I nodded.

“Remember when that piece of machinery fell from the ceiling? You managed to get out of the way just in time. The truth is, though, that it was supposed to kill you.”

I realized then that my own corpse had come back to haunt me.

My Friend Frederick

Nicholas

Some time ago, a man by the name of Frederick Dundleberry approached me and began to tell me about the fact that he possessed a talking sheepdog. This very notion made me extremely uncomfortable, as I had known Frederick since the age of four, and had always believed him to be an honest man, this statement made me question his fundamental truthfulness.

I decided that it would be in mankind's best interest if I were to eliminate him until he stopped this madness that was tearing our friendship apart. I shoved a tranquilizer dart between his ribs, and he passed out. Unbeknownst to me, though, he had actually passed AWAY. But with him out of the picture, his dog could be closely examined. I called the nearest veterinary clinic, which greeted me with a rather rude accountant by the name of Doris. I didn't like her attitude, so I eliminated her as well. With that slug out of the way, nothing was standing between the dog and me.

I rode my scooter to Frederick's former place of residence. A garden gnome assaulted my eyes with a barrage of Technicolor ugliness. It had to be obliterated. After shooting the gnome with a BB gun, I knew it was safe. I crept through Frederick's opened door, and began searching for his dog. As it turns out, he had purchased a guard chameleon the same day before. I rounded a corner to the kitchen and beheld the chameleon viciously tearing apart a leaf of lettuce. Since I enjoyed living, I decided not to disturb it. I crept as quietly as I could past the demonized lizard.

I stepped out of sight of the kitchen, the horrific crunching of lettuce stopped. I carefully peeked around the corner into the kitchen to see that the horrid creature had subsequently vanished. I knew then that one of us was going down, and if it was going to be me, then I was gonna take the chameleon down too. So I pulled out a .44 Magnum, the most powerful handgun in the world, and I prepared for a fight.

Unfortunately, the chameleon was far too highly trained in combat for me to handle. He defeated me quickly and without a scratch. He called the police on me, and I noticed that he had a very friendly voice. He actually sounded quite like Frederick.

It was at that moment that I realized that the chameleon was Frederick's talking animal, not as I had once assumed- a sheepdog! The police believed my story about the chameleon talking, and I was let by with a warning.

But, by "a warning", I mean that I was sent to prison for 600 years.

Several Incomplete Exercises That Yesterday
Faintly Amused Me

Jon Lemmon

*oh! from where
do all the words arise, is it from the HE without,
or from the ME within.*

I am the dog

*that DESIRES the DEAD wood.
I have a small home so I desire a small husband.
With wet kisses she decorates my weakened knees.
With a grin, and from behind a handy hand, I am the lowly valley
below, that VIEWS the SUNNY mountain above.*

Touch, kiss, desire; but don't love. I am the sad sea

*that sounds like a DEAD song.
I am the neglected bird that's not upon any list.
Fight, draw, love; but don't curse.*

I am the OLD girl that DESIRES the colourful children.

William Burrough's

*paints his sister, calmly cuts up roughly,
the colourful story, is fervently in love with the WARM city,
plugs in privately his neon housewife, gently curses
the girl guide, loudly curses the boy
scout, pours tea and
butters bread.*

*"I'm an ordinary kind of guy, really; turn me over,
have a look at my labeling, have a look and see."*

THE plot GROWs.

*I'm sorry, announces the neat curator, but the big bird is
dead.*

*And in solemn procession the old FOLK file slowly by, throw
newly cut flowers, mumble strange prayers, leave
cheap plastic mementoes, VIEW QUIETLY THE huge,
but empty nest, hanging precariously
from the museum's colourful
mosaic roof.*

The artist TRAVELs

*like a RAINY name in a WARM mouth. your Children GROW,
yearS SAIL by (and you die.)*

*the artist paints his RUNNY colours upon SUNNY paper.
oh WHERE, he asks, did my LIVELY hands go?*

*the artist GROWs like a MISTY fire in a CLEAR eye.
peace IS A dead end, says the drunk vicar, to the
drunk alter boy.*

*the artist ENDUREs like a microscopic farm, grown upon the
arm, of a wet farmers palm. you see the sheep, you see the cow,
you see the duck, you see the duckling. oh why, my dear, i seem to ask,
do you give me that RAINY day look?*

As an occupation (perhaps)

*the artist weaves flu as he lives rent free
inside the snug architecture of a BIG woman's woolen jumper. Jelly,
asks the BIG Woman, Custard. Later,*

*like an OLD tree in a deserted
forest, the artist FALLS. did you hear him.*

I didn't. or maybe i did.

*the artist erodes like a DEAD number, writ, upon a small card,
inside the fluffy pocket of a disapproving father.*

*All stories are dead, says the insignificant writer, taking up
his pen and writing again. And how do you spell
HABERDASHERY, he asks, and*

*SCALOPINE. *(i)*

*all stories are dead stories, says William Burrough's. ALL STORIES
ARE DEAD stories, Says Timothy Leary. All stories are
dead stories, says Alister Crowley. All stories
are wet stories, says Bob Dylan.*

and this story is also dead (and wet) says me to she.

*And out the corner of my eye, i think i see
John and Yoko fly by*

hear

plastic. ono. yoko. music. insect. buzz. fly.

*words calculated.
but not including these. 449.
characters calculated.
but not including these. 2815.*

*the enumeration of all punctuation has been omitted.
the word "fluff" in all cases, due to phobic inclination, has been
omitted, as has the one word "lick."*

Final note: all spelling mistakes are intentional.

**(i) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scaloppine>*

Dinner with a Pair of Charming Lunatics

Nathan Gallegos

“It is as if a portion of the impossible, unimagined by time and abandoned by all propriety, has chosen to vomit itself forth in the form of this penumbra of inedible carnage upon my plate,” she said, with an air of disgust and insulted pride, sceptically poking at her plate with a fork.

“Claim it’s rabid and you think it’s trying to hypnotize you.”

“That’s your answer for everything!.”

“And it still stands, god damnit!” he cried, and pounded his fist upon the table.

“Shhh! Be quiet!” she said, laughing.

“Stop trying to hypnotize me,” he said, and winked at her. “I don’t go in for that kind of weird voodoo.”

“Not yet you don’t,” she smiled.

“That sounds like a challenge.”

“It is what it is.”

“Garçon! More of this delightful gruel!” he shouted across the restaurant.

“God, will you shut up?!” she laughed, and put her hand on his arm.

“It’s the only way to get service around here,” he assured her.

“Oh, is it now?”

“You seem sceptical.”

“Standing quietly beneath a tree, the elephant makes a poor diplomat.”

“But the roads are safer than they’ve been in years!”

“Such are the hazards of the English language,” she threw her hands up as if to accentuate the hopelessness of the situation.

“Too true,” he sighed, “too true.”

The waiter appeared besides the table the way a smile sometimes appears across the face of the moon.

“We demand more of your most expensive veals, garçon, and another bottle of your cheapest wine. We demand excellence, sir, but luckily for you we decided to eat here anyway.”

“Very good, sir.” The waiter walked away.

“You’re such an asshole!” she exclaimed, trying to hide her laughter. “You know he’s going to do something to our food now, don’t you?”

“Not in a classy establishment like this. I mean, look around. The walls are wet with the ooze of pure swank, the floors are slick with the oily film of regurgitated good taste. But never mind that, that guy actually said, ‘Very good, sir.’ Can you imagine that? ‘Very good, sir.’ I mean really, he really said that!”

“I know! it’s crazy.”

“It is. What do you know about French handkerchiefs?”

“I know they made me think you were going to say French handcuffs, beyond that, not much at all.”

“I think we’re in the wrong place. I mean, just look around. Are those light bulbs? And isn’t that a plant of some sort? I think it might even be growing.” There was an increasing sense of outrage in his voice.

“My, the hideousness of it,” she said with a bit of sarcasm.

“It’s unimaginable! These intolerable conditions...Here, let’s throw some nasty thoughts at it and see what happens. You know that’s supposed to affect them right?”

“How about we send some loving thoughts instead?” she suggested.

He stared at her a minute, then raised his glass for a toast. “You’re weird,” he said.

“So are you,” she said, and raised her glass.

“To cannibalism, my darling.”

“In all it’s forms, my love.”

The Occupied Bed
Toby E. Baldwin
(aka Sorry Apologies)

1

There was, in the corner of the room, a soft green plant that was forgiven of all but its most secret leaves, and which withered against the gray windows and tried for light. It was coming apart endlessly, reforming endlessly, and coming apart again. Again and again it slumped against itself, waiting for water. Again it tried the window for light and dropped its crisp yellow leaves, which floated slowly away from it. I never saw it watered. I did not want it to be watered. I wanted to watch it pull itself back into the ground and die.

There was something dying in the corner of every room. I could hear the rushed, hushed voices pulling people from the safety of sleep to questions and light and to the want for sleep again. I realized the sudden ping of beeps and loose clattering metallic rustle of something being wheeled away and back again. The edge of the room was enveloped in the blurring haste of others. And I could feel the slow exhale of wind against the windows. And so I heaved myself from the dented sheets of sleep and into the stiff air of the busy room. I looked at my wife's bed. Two young men with large hands washed her naked body. The door was open to the hallway and I thought I could smell the hard light that came through it. It smelled like singed hair.

“Your wife has passed away, Mr. Neathery.”

“Passed away into what?”

“Into the earth. Into God.”

“From our praying hands to His waiting hands, Mr. Neathery.”

2

Our children came into our lives, fully grown, before we had noticed our lives at all. We wrapped ourselves in the cool shadow of a house and settled like dust on everything around us. Before we understood ourselves, we had children to try and understand that we could never imagine. We crawled into our children’s beds and broke their fevers. We lifted our children from tubs of water and laid them down to dry in sheets and pillows. We saw ourselves in our children, in the movement of a hand and the sound of laughter. As long as they are alive we will be alive, confined to our secret canthus and brought out again in the palm of an opening hand. We recognized immortality in our children.

The children formed themselves into a single ball in our stomachs and minds. For years when I was alone, I would think I saw something moving from the corner of my eye, a small white glint like the edge of a glass, and when I would go to it with my hands out it would be one of our children again, jumping into my arms. It would be one of our children laughing, filling our house again. But, I knew that our children had moved through us; had moved through our house and were gone and I’d close my hand around a toy and push it back into a shadow. Our children were like dreams we had once. They were like stories we told each other. We watched as one feature dissolved into another until there was nothing left but an empty house.

“We’re going to change you real quick, Mr. Neathery.”

“Who?”

“Your wet, Mr. Neathery. We’ll change you.”

“Well, we. I’ve. Now wait a minute. Hold on.”

She kept everything. She was not wasteful. She filled our house with everything she could remember. There was nothing she had forgotten. “Our things are our memories,” she would say. “Without our things we would have no memory.” Sometimes at night I could feel the whole house bowing toward the earth; sagging like a mattress. But with our memories so much and everywhere, we slept standing up, against each other’s backs. Each new memory pressed another forgotten memory further away, into a window that cracked slowly against the settling light of evening or caused forgotten memories to roll from a thousand shadows into our hands again to be remembered and replaced.

“He looks like he is sinking into the bed.”

“He is.”

“We’ll have to peel him off.”

“Someone else does that.”

“O God, what is that?”

“A skin tear. We are just bursting at the seams, aren’t we Mr. Neathery?”

3

We were bunched up against the windows of our emptied house and grouping the panes. We dragged our long hands through the blank space between us, trying to drag each other into the past, into ourselves. We devoured each other an hour at a time. We pulled each other through time and space and into our mouths. We lived together gathered around each other like warm embers. We were going on. We were like our house, emptied of its children, emptied of laughter and movement. We were motionless. We remained still, settled within each other, a part of each other, each other.

I remember that I did not know if I was in front of the mirror or if she was in front of me. If it was my hand or hers that touched my face, I couldn’t tell; but, I felt the sharp little bones there like the fragile bones of a frog through its thin skin.

“Good morning. How are we today?”

“Our feet are the color of plums.”

“Plum colored.”

“Well.”

“You should tell the Doctor if your feet are plum colored.”

“They are beautiful.”

“Would you like to sit at the window Mr. Neathery?”

4

The morning sun had just throttled and thrown its huge head back against the long evening. And there was nothing left of the sky. I remember a soft throw of reddest tipped trees leaning against the bone colored walls of further buildings that grayed with dusk and the dust colored curtains before me lit with flame as the curled notes of darker night settled like soot against the fine air. We are all going to die. Let me again and again breathe the thick angled smoke of memories. Let me turn them over in my hand. Let me see them.

If we are coming apart now, let it be because we are dissolving into the rich light of other rooms and not because we are covered by the hard hands of strangers and pulled backwards from ourselves. I am going to tell you that our house is filling up with cats. And that while I was asleep, you were being forgotten. Your hands and feet were being forgotten. Your white thigh and long neck were being forgotten, until there was nothing left but an empty room. And I was not with you. I want to reach through those who were, into the light of the hall and retrieve you from the darkness. I want you to reach through the darkness and retrieve me from the light. We are alone, Melina. You have pulled yourself back into the earth, back away from me.

“Look at him.”

“All dressed up.”

“And nowhere to go, but up.”

“Or down.”

“Are we ready for dinner then, Mr. Neathery?”

“Who dressed him today? He looks like he’s going to a funeral.”

“Come along now. The feast is waiting.”

“The Priest is waiting.”

A Trial of Empathy

M.E. Purfield
(a.k.a. MEP)

Chapter 1

Samuel gave his opinion. The co-worker said something harsh to Samuel. Samuel flinched, said, “I don’t understand,” and then walked back to his cubicle.

Chapter 2

Samuel’s boss called him into a private meeting. Human Resources sat next to him. The boss told Samuel about the complaint his co-workers have been making. He asked Samuel to defend himself. Samuel said, “I don’t understand.”

The boss fired Samuel.

Security escorted him out of the building.

Chapter 3

When he got home, Samuel’s wife asked what happened. Why did they fire him?

He told her, "I don't understand."

Neither did she. She said that he shouldn't take this from them.

He nodded.

Chapter 4

Samuel went to a lawyer. The lawyer heard Samuel's case. He told Samuel that the company couldn't get away with that kind of action. He believed that Samuel had to understand why the company fired him.

"I'll take the case."

"I don't understand."

"You don't have to," the lawyer said. "This is an open and shut case."

Chapter 5

The prosecution and the defense stated their cases to the jury. The co-worker and the boss took the stand.

When Samuel took the stand, the defense asked him a question.

"I don't understand," Samuel said.

The defense rephrased the question.

"I don't understand."

The defense rephrased the same question for the next hour. They gave up and asked Samuel to sit down.

Chapter 6

The jury was ready to read the verdict. The foreman stood. “We the jury don’t understand.”

Samuel tapped his lawyer on the shoulder and said, “That’s what I’m talking about.”

Home is
Omino Pascal

It quivered wetly in the corner of the room. Yet it was still beating, and I was still alive. After a while the pain subsided. I got up, almost slipping in my blood, went down stairs, and checked the post. Bills, bills, bills, adverts, bills.

I held the newspaper to my chest to stem the flow of blood, and also to stop myself from peering in to the hole. I decided to brave the cellar, and picked out a bottle at random, uncorked it, and downed half. Crashing onto the sofa, I sighed, mostly feeling groggy. The night air was cold on my exposed ribcage.

After a few hours rest, I felt a little better, so I went back upstairs and had a shower, leaving my clothes in a heap in the middle of the living room. The shower seemed very small for some reason, and I was acutely aware of the hum of the water heater behind the wall of the bathroom. I soaped the blood out of my hair and body. Looking down at my chest, the open cavity where my heart used to be had stopped bleeding. I placed the bar of soap in the cavity, washed the foam off, took the bar out and set it down in the bath, toweled off, and got out a dressing gown from the airing cupboard.

I closed the cupboard door, and realized that it was still there, in the corner of my vision. There were a couple of hairs on it, and it was stuck to the floor with dried blood, but it was still beating strong. Looking at it made me

shiver. As I got more nervous, it pulsed faster, which made me more nervous.

It was strange not being able to hear the beat of my heart from the inside. I put a hand to my chest. It was drumming frantically. I asked my heart why it was still beating from the other side of the room. It answered with an all too familiar lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub. I slammed the door behind me, relishing the silence that came.

I left it in that corner of the room, not daring to move it for fear that it might stop, and that I might die without it. I couldn't tell anyone, of course, and didn't answer the phone for the first few weeks. Most of the time I sat at the dining table writing, or thinking about the relentless beating heart, collecting dust.

The ancient Greeks thought that the heart was the seat of cognition, and that the brain's function was merely to cool the blood.

The Harlequinade, a character from the *Commedia dell'arte*, wears his heart on his sleeve.

If your heart weighs more than a single feather, it will be eaten by the daemon hippopotamus Ammit (Eater of Hearts).

I gathered food by night, in out of town petrol stations, fearing being spotted by people I knew, or that the hole in my chest would be discovered. It was high in saturated fats, but what did that matter now? As I drove back into my driveway, I looked up at the night sky. The window of my bedroom was open. A cold, stabbing pain gripped me as I hurried inside. When I opened the door, it was gone. A trail of blood stretched from the floor to the windowsill. Gazing out of the window, I thought I saw something obstruct the light of the moon, but only for a second. My heart was gone. I fell to my knees, closed my eyes, and listened for something, anything.

It came. Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub. I could hear it in my head. Blood rushing past my ears. The veins in my throat swelled, choking me. Bolts of nervous energy sizzled through my body. I tore my shirt open, and the hole was gone.

I had thought about, dreamed about this for months. Picking up my heart,

and replacing it in my chest, where it belonged. But instead I was paralytic with fear. The beating grew louder and faster. It was not my heart; it felt alien in my chest. The blood it pumped was not mine. I felt nauseous and disgusted. I stumbled to my desk draw, and picked out a small letter opener. The blade was black with dried blood. Now I knew why my heart had burst out of my chest: I had ripped it out. How many more times would I do this, until my true heart was returned to me? I dug it in, and the ribcage snapped open. The heart popped out with a wet slurping sound, squirming in fresh blood. I fell to the floor, and waited for the darkness to wipe my memory of this event once more.

Bullet 23

Amy Probst
(a.k.a. Amy P.)

Nora with the shitty sons, she wrote this story.

I killed him after breakfast, high on coffee and frosted raisin toast. Fifty bullets to the scrotum, then one to the head. Because he didn't die from the fifty. Shredded bits of skin flew onto the table, stuck to the drapes, bled through my housecoat. The blood was enough to make you vomit. And I did, holding back my long blonde hair with a burning hand.

It was worth it.

He was still alive after the fiftieth bullet ran through the loose space that had been his "tool of love" and accessories. My husband's love tool was a figment of his imagination in function before this morning, and now, in actuality.

I drugged his eggs so he wouldn't be able to run. Too groggy. Shooting him dead right away wouldn't have satisfied; I wanted the emotional fireworks show. The pleading, rationalizing, and mind melt that happens from extreme pain and fatal realization.

He did not disappoint.

My old man's eyes were windows of terror, rage, guilt, fear, and pathetic helpless misery. Loneliness, too; when you realize you're dying and nobody can or will intervene on your behalf, intense loneliness tends to set in, in my experience.

"Please let me live," he said after the 23rd bullet. That bullet was a rough one; it must have hit pelvic bone or something, ricocheting upward and coming out through the bastard's stomach. I thought to look for a metal hip he'd never told me about, but digging through his ragged groin, decided I could live with the mystery.

"I don't want to die."

He meant it, too. Those were likely the most sincere words he'd ever said to me in our fourteen years of marriage.

"I'm glad," I said. "You've just increased my buzz tenfold, you miserable fuck."

Then I delivered bullet number twenty-four.

A Breakthrough

Josh Stockinger
(a.k.a. horsethief)

He was always getting his feelings hurt so he asked his doctor about having them removed.

"I guess it could be done," his doctor said. "It's risky, but possible based on my idea of the year 2009."

Later that morning, he was watching TV in the post-operating room when his doctor stopped by with a couple of questions.

"Hi, there. How are you feeling?" his doctor said.

"I'm not."

"Listen, does it upset you to know we took a peek at your penis while you were under and all the nurses laughed at it?"

"No."

"Great," the doctor said, patting him on the arm. "The surgery worked. You should be happy."

He wasn't.

The Glub

Toxic_Ermine

Like a sudden case of bad cramps and diarrhea in the dead of the night, the Glub came. Not all at once, mind you. But slowly. Mischievously. Dark, wet, foul smelling footprints going from the old shag carpet in the living room, up the wall, and across the ceiling. It took Wendilyn hours to clean, however the stains and the smell did not quite go away. Wendilyn simply blamed the phenomena on pixies or bogeys. Common house hold pests up to their goblinery. Anyway she had no time for such things. She had just started her new job a week ago and she was loving every minute of it. Wendilyn was a dream-weaver. She specialized in the cute and cuddly, squishy dreams. The kind with singing puppies, happy kitties, dancing bears, picnics with favorite cartoons, sunshine, lollipops, etc., etc..... She was the star employee at the Sandman Worldwide Corporations™, Toddler (and fruity adult) Dream Division. All day long, sitting at her golden spinning wheel, she would cast and weave the dreams, roll them into spools, place them into the appropriate size 16 corrugated cardboard box, and then the nocturnal shipping department would do the rest. She would come home at night, exhausted but satisfied with another job well done. That is until the Glub struck again.

No footprints this time but nostril debris, crusty and brown, stuck and smeared onto the walls. Wendilyn looked at her defiled, dotted with hardened snot, wallpaper in total disgust. A foamy belch came from the kitchen and she raced to find its source. And there he stood. Or more accurately, slouched, in front of the refrigerator, the contents of which

were broken and strewn across the floor in a brightly colored rainbow of commercially appealing food goods. He stood about six foot high, with a bloated, hairy, belly and an enormous, lumpy, potato shaped nose. Ratty ears poked out from long, greasy black hair that hung like limp seaweed from his misshapen head. Skinny, spidery arms hung to the floor, fingers like bony earthworms, his knuckles scraped the linoleum. He raised a long, spindly arm and wiped his large toothsome mouth with the back of his baseball mitt sized hand. Unblinking, he stared at her with white, bulbous, ping pong ball eyes. Like a striking spider he leapt into the air over Wendilyn's head, hopped down the hall, and disappeared under the old shag carpet in the living room. A gelatinous laugh trailed off from under the rug. Wendilyn sighed and shook her blonde head as she began to clean up the mess. "I've got a Glub in the house." she muttered.

From that point on, the Glub became an absolute terror. While never physically harming her, he would terrorize her in the most unwholesome, disgusting and verbally abusive ways. Slap slap slapping his long flappity feet down the halls and on the ceilings as loudly as he could. Defecating on the clean dishes. Eating all of her food then vomiting in her underwear drawer. Sometimes Wendilyn would wake up in the dead of night only to see him standing next to her bed, staring at her with his bulbous phosphorescent ping pong ball eyes, breathing heavily on her. She would scream. He would scream back. They would both scream, causing the neighbors next door to scream from hearing the terrible screaming coming from next door. He would call her names. Vicious, ugly, bruising words. Wendilyn would cry herself to sleep while the Glub sexually defiled her couch, gargling and hooting with obscene pleasure. Wendilyn's work began to suffer. Her boss had reprimanded her several times due to complaints from disturbed parents who had to explain to their young ones why their dreams were filled with teddy bears doing "naughty" things with octopus headed demon gods. She was on the verge of being demoted to the Nightmare Division. Those dream weavers were just vile, and the delight they took in their work made vomit boil up in the back of Wendilyn's throat. Something had to be done. The Glub had to go.

Wendilyn had begun asking questions around her work concerning the proper extermination of a Glub. Mostly people reacted with a childish spasmodic disgust, mingled with low-key sympathy. Wendilyn was treated as if she was giving safe haven to a pack of murderous cannibal child molesters. She would sigh, then, thank them for their time and return to her

work. Like all jobs go, especially in places like Sandman Worldwide Corporations™, the gossip mill began to churn. Tooth faeries on the third floor were chanting “Glub lover! Glub lover! Don’t forget to use a rubber!!!!” and giggled raucously like stoned chipmunks. Wendilyn made a mental note to report them to human resources for sexual harassment.

“So ya wanna know how to get rid of a Glub?”

Wendilyn squeaked in fright and nervously scanned the florescent hallway. There was no one else there except her.

“Down here kiddo.”

Wendilyn’s eyes slowly lowered. A large tabby cat wearing a bowler derby hat was leaning lazily against a potted plant rolling a cigarette. It was Phinn, the head of building maintenance. He finished rolling the cigarette, placed it in his mouth, and pulled out a book of matches. He was about to light up when Wendilyn interjected.

“Uh...Phinn?”

“Hmm? “ he looked up at her with golden eyes.

“Hi. You’re...uh.. n-not allowed to smoke cigarettes in here.”

“S’ not a cigarette, it’s a ripper.” He lit up and inhaled deeply.

“A rip...you mean, a reefer?”

Phinn hissed at her. “Quiet!!! Piss and vinegar woman! ! Ya wanna get me in trouble!?” he exhaled a large cloud of bluish smoke.

“Now ya wanna know how to get rid of that beastie or not!? He took another long drag off his “ripper”.

Wendyllynn dropped to one knee and took Phinn by his white-socked paw. “Yes Phinn!! Oh yes!! More than anything! You have no idea!” Tears welled up in her green eyes.

“Get a hold a ya self girl!” He exhaled another cloud of bluish smoke at her.

“Get ya self (COUGH!!) a divorce lawyer.”

“Excuse me? A w-what?” Wendilyn shook her head and blinked several times.

“Are ya deaf woman!! The Glub is one of the vilest and despicable household pests ever ta live!! They live on pain, misery, and heartache!! The only way ta stoppem is ta fight fire with fire. Get ya self a divorce lawyer. But it has ta be a good one, other wise”, he took a deep drag from the “ripper” and pointed it at her. “Yer screwed.”

Wendilyn returned home that night later than normal and sat down in her recliner, a large satisfied grin on her face. The Glub sauntered into the room eating a ridiculously large chocolate ice cream cone. It was dripping down his arm and onto the white shag carpet. He sat down on the couch opposite her and stared, slurping and sucking his ice cream. Wendilyn smiled at him. The Glub cocked his head and made a confused grunt. A knock came from the door. Wendilyn jumped from the recliner and looked at the Glub. “Now I wonder who that could be?” She smiled mischievously. She opened the door and ushered her guest into the living room. The Glub stiffened and dropped the ice cream onto the floor. An eight-foot tall sasquatch in a tweed blazer lumbered into the room with Wendilyn. He nodded politely at the Glub and pulled out a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles and placed them on his Kelsey Grammar like face. Opening his brief case he removed several sheets of paper, scanned through them to make sure they were in order, cleared his throat, and said, “Well now. Shall we begin?”

“By all means”, Wendilyn replied. She sat back in her recliner and folded her arms, smiling profusely.

The Glub let out a nervous whine and got up to leave.

“Whereas, it is the desire and intentions of the parties to settle by agreement all of their marital affairs

The Glub froze in his tracks. The lawyer continued.

“With respect to property, financial matters.....” The Glub began to rock back and forth, breathing heavily, whining, his nostrils flaring. The lawyer

raised his voice.

“Now there fore,” his voice took the tone of a televangelist preaching the vengeance of the lord.

“In consideration of the premises and the mutual promises and undertakings herein contained, and for other good and valuable consideration, the parties agree to the following....”

The lawyer’s voice droned on and on. The Glub began to shake violently, sweat pouring down his pale, clammy, face. He jumped up and down as if the floor were on fire. He began to sob and wail. He covered his ears to shut out the noise. The sasquatch kept going, his voice louder and more intense, rising in power.

“The parties agree to permanently live separate and apart from the other party, free from any control, restraint, or interference, direct, or indirect, by the other party.....”

The Glub was screaming now. At the top of his lungs. He tore at his body with his fingers, black ichor splashing everywhere. His flesh began to crack and peel, bloody shreds falling to the floor. The walls began shaking and lurching violently. Objects were falling off shelves and shattering on the floor. Plaster rained from the cracking ceiling. It was as if a full force hurricane let loose in the living room. Wendilyn took cover behind her recliner as the bizarre exorcism continued.

The lawyer raised his large, hairy, hands in the air and shouted above the chaos.

“Both parties agree that the court granting the divorce, at the request of either party, insert in the final judgment....”

The Glub let loose one final, inhuman wail. All the misery he ever inflicted upon all his victims, all the anguish, all the pain and abuse was reflected in that scream. It was the sonic equivalent to an icicle thrust into the rectum. The Glub stomped his foot once, hard, onto the floor, and burst into a cloud of cobwebs and dust.

All was eerily silent. Wendilyn peeked out from behind her recliner. The

sasquatch coughed and dusted cobwebs and debris from his jacket. “Well now,” he said as he began putting the papers back into his dust-covered briefcase, “That just about covers it.” He pulled out a small abacus from the inside of his jacket, worked out a few calculations, jotted it down on a slip of paper, and handed it to Wendilyn.

“My bill”, he smiled. “Good evening.” The sasquatch lawyer left Wendilyn, alone, in the ruins of her house. Wendilyn surveyed her broken home. She slumped onto her plaster covered recliner and gaped at the lawyers bill. She began to sob. Uncontrollably. Out of happiness. Out of relief. Out of the fact that her home was destroyed and she now had a gigantic legal fee to pay off. “Oh well”, she thought as she wiped her nose on her sleeve. “It is a Friday night.” She shuffled through the debris into the kitchen and found a bottle of whiskey in one of the cupboards. She popped the top off and took a large gulp. Her eyes bulged and she sprayed the mouthful all over the kitchen sink. The Glub had refilled the bottle with his urine.

Convergence
Parola Veleno

Boing.
Catch.
Boing.

A red ball bounces from the hand of the only blue-eyed Japanese woman in New York City to the floor, and from her hand to the floor again. It has been bouncing for three weeks straight.

Bouncing this ball is all Pearl does. She sits and bounces the red ball and never stops to eat or sleep. Pearl sits on the floor against the living room wall and stares out the window of the furnitureless, top floor penthouse at the brick building across the street, rarely glancing at the bouncing ball. She doesn't need to watch what she's doing. The ball is probably bouncing itself at this point. Its velocity is now greater than its gravity.

Catch.
Boing.
Catch.

Pearl listens as an elevator hums through the old apartment building, empty on all floors but the bottom and the top. She can hear the elevator clawing its way upward, carrying the weight of her world, and she listens to the

bouncing ball instead.

Boing.

Catch.

Boing.

An octopus loosens his tie, picks up his briefcase, and exits the elevator as a man. Pearl listens to the red ball as a key turns in the lock.

Catch.

Unbuttoning his jacket and stretching a tentacle, the octopus enters the room.

Boing.

"Oh, you've got to be kidding, Pearl. Day after day, I get home and you're still doing this. Why? I don't understand why the adjustment has been so difficult for you. Please, honey, just stop."

Catch.

He throws his jacket onto the floor beside her and sits on it. He looks at her pale skin and wishes she'd move. He wishes she'd love him in full color again, with the scent of the ocean in her hair. She turns to look at him through strands of unwashed black hair and the blue of her eyes punches him in the gut.

"Don't you remember what it was like before, Pearl? They made you turn tricks, catch and roll for money. You hated it. You hated it and I saved you. This was supposed to be our new life, remember? We learned how to shift forms, we learned their language, and we even got married. Hell, Pearl, I'm a damned attorney now! Don't we have the life we always wanted? We're no longer aquarium spectacles, but human. We're part of a world of possibilities and freedom instead of just an octopus and a dolphin, captive and helpless. Look at yourself now. You're beautiful, Pearl. You could have anything you want. Pearl, are you even listening to me?!"

Boing.

Catch.

Boing.

"That's it. Give me that fucking ball!" He tackles Pearl and pins down her arm. He wrenches the ball from her fingers and throws it toward the window.

The ball hits the wall. Pearl's restless bouncing had instilled such force into that small ball that it knocks the outside wall of their penthouse right off of the building. They watch as the wall tips outward and falls. Plaster, glass, and steel beams go tumbling down to the street below. They hear it crashing onto the sidewalk. A scream and a cloud of dust rise into the air.

"Damn it, Pearl! Now look what you've made me do!" The octopus walks over and kicks a chunk of plaster out.

Pearl stands slowly and silently. She takes a tiny silver key from the octopus's coat pocket and unlocks a small door in her chest. She tugs at the end of a red ribbon in the small doorway and pulls out a bit of her heart, just enough to tie it to the apartment doorknob. She knots it tightly and turns around. The red ribbon drapes from her chest to the front door.

"Pearl, what are you doing?" The octopus walks toward her and reaches out a tentacle to grab her, but he stumbles over his half-shifted form of tentacles and jumbled legs and falls to the floor.

Pearl runs past him toward the open wall and leaps from the penthouse. Her heart, still tied to the door, unravels as she falls.

Grace Darcy runs down her stairs and into her sunny kitchen to grab the ringing telephone. Her father's weak and trembling voice sobs into her ear. "Grace, it's... your mother. She... They couldn't save her, honey. I just can't believe it," he cries. "A wall fell on her, Grace, a wall. I tried to help her... I couldn't... God, Grace, it... it fell right out of the sky." She collapses to the floor in tears, still clutching the receiver.

Outside, a red ribbon runs past her house, down the sidewalk and around the corner, disappearing into traffic.

Lindsey Lohan

Babyhead

Hey, Lindsay Lohan!

You are a TOXIC POODLE! You are a QUICHE LORRAINE! I will save your career!

You will star in a new movie called Child Avengers.

I will write this movie for you on my Thinkpad.

This movie will be mega awesome and totally have great production values. This movie is about abused children who are sad and hopeless and fragile. They don't know what to do. There is an ASIAN child and a BLACK child and a LATINO child and a WHITE child, and the WHITE child is crippled. The actor playing the crippled child will actually be crippled.

The first scene is a trippy montage filmed in black and white with handheld cameras. Children are being horribly abused. There is sexual abuse. Then the montage ends.

In the next scene the children all run away from home and meet up somehow and walk around New York City and get tired, and run out of money for hot dogs and soft pretzels and soda. Someone, a shadow person, gives the

children a business card. The business card says "Call Child Avengers!" and has a phone number on it.

"Sssshhh," the shadow person says. "It's a big secret."

The children call Child Avengers.

"Hello?" Lindsay Lohan says. "This is Child Avengers. How may we help you?"

"Avenge us," the children say. "Please."

In another scene Lindsay Lohan and the children are driving around in a big black car with black machine guns and wanting vengeance. The government knows about them and is trying to stop them by sending Cyborg Assassins to kill them. Lindsay doesn't like this. She gets angry with the government and won't let the Cyborg Assassins stop her.

Also there are flashback scenes where Lindsay works as a secret government agent and fights with her boss, who is all corrupt and a pedophile. Lindsay gets pissed off and quits and the government hates that. Lindsay goes underground and lives in secret hideouts because she knows too many government secrets and the government can't deal with that.

The soundtrack of the movie will be all emo and sad. There will be Jenny Lewis songs and Kathleen Hanna songs and one Bono song, but I will cut the Bono song.

Johnny Depp will star as the shadow person.

He will say nice things about Lindsay to Star Magazine. He will say this is Lindsay's breakthrough role. The critics will say nice things and everyone will look at her differently, and Hollywood will be different and the world will be different. Lindsay will think, I am a serious person now and I will not make any more Herbie movies or other stupid movies, and I will make less money and wear less makeup and still drink heavily, but only wine and only alone in the dark late at night at my house while I am reading poetry.

She will write bad poetry and not show it to anyone.

When Lindsay Lohan is very old she will feel lonely, and go on lonely walks. She will walk in the park. She will walk along the river. She will wear a facemask because the atmosphere is contaminated with carbon nanotubes and plastic fibers, and tiny robots the size of one big molecule, and everyone will have to wear those masks or they will die.

She will give an interview to People Magazine.

She will talk about how she wanted Princess Diaries and went to her agent and said "get me Princess Diaries" but her agent told her "you will never get Princess Diaries" so she got mad and fired him. Lindsay will reveal how she stalked Ann Hathaway and took detailed notes on everywhere Ann Hathaway went and what she did, and how she kidnapped Ann Hathaway and tortured her by pricking her naked feet with pins held under a cigarette lighter flame.

She told Ann Hathaway "never talk about this."

The interview sells a lot of People Magazines. Lindsay gets famous again from all the publicity, and people start thinking about Lindsay Lohan again and yelling "Hey, Lindsay Lohan!" when they see her. She gets Child Avengers 2. She gets Princess Diaries 3 and plays the Julie Andrews part. She wins a People's Choice Award for Princess Diaries 3.

As A Crow Flies
Incognito Chick

Frenzied flocks of sea gulls sweep across a pallid sky. This does not distract me. I stand in the intersection between Insane Benson Street and Lame Jane Avenue deciding the direction of the compass.

I want to walk where the crows fly. But there are no crows. Just seagulls. And they are frenzied. Flying too. Besides, the compass needle says Insane Benson Street to the left is south. And the seagulls are flying down Lame Jane Avenue, which is north.

I used to have a map. It showed the direction to heaven, but the frenzied sea gulls were hungry. So I tore it up into tiny pieces and fed it to them. Now I don't have a map. The frenzied sea gulls do.

North seems the more likely direction to heaven, because Santa lives at the North Pole. That's what Jane told me, before I hammered her with the axe. She was crazy anyway. I fed her to the frenzied seagulls too.

This is why I want to walk with the crows.

I turn towards Insane Benson Street, which is south. Hell might be down the road, but there would be crows too. Those seagulls can fly on Lame Jane Street – I wasn't crazy enough to do that, even if it does lead to heaven.

The Argyle Oven-Mitt Mystery

Justynn Tyme

It was March 10th 1982. I was sitting in my book lined study reading a 16th print edition of Errol Blanchard's "Boxcars Of Serendipity" a double genitive guide to modern spoon spotting. On the other side of the room Wrigley was scribble aimless on a piece of paper. I thought to myself as I watched him complete with little talent page after page of chaotic scribbles that I was right in requesting Wrigley to be my biographer. After all, I must be the most important man in Delaware.

To our surprise there was a definite rapping at the outside door that fed out onto North Broom. Wrigley looked at me quite quizzically not knowing how to respond to such an aperture I answered the door. In fell a disheveled business man who rasped and hissed at me all the while clutching my trouser legs with desperate force.

"Mister Assistant! Mister Assistant! I am dying." He hoarsely yodeled

"Oh my starts and stars! It's Edward Funkling. Wrigley you remember Edward. We spotted a cryptic modern French spoon on his kitchen table last year that led to all that trouble with police. Remember?" I remarked to Wrigley who, being an excellent biographer returned to feverishly scribbling the events that were unfolding before us.

"Tell me Edward who did this to you." I queried

"Don't worry about that; I am done for. There is nothing in all the world that can save me." his eyes spun around like a ping pong ball in the pick twenty lottery machine.

"There must be something I can do to help you. After all I must be the singularly most important man in Delaware."

"Well, if I could..." he faded out. I had to smack him in the side of the head with my shoe.

"If, if I could just see...see ugh" and he faded out again and fell from the stoop into the room. I yelled to Wrigley to get me the smelling salt. Wrigley put on the argyle oven mitt and ran to the medicine cabinet in other room and tossed me the bottle. It exploded overhead like it was a hand grenade. Luckily the smelling salt rained down around us but not in our air space. I smeared some on my hand and stuck my finger as far as I could up his nostrils. He awoke with a start but fell back limply.

"Edward, Edward! Can you hear me?"

"Yes.... " He whispered

"What is that I can do to save your life?"

"Show me....show me."

"Yes."

"Show me ..."

"Yes! Yes!"

"Show... show me a picture of your childish home in the Belfonte."

"Quick Wrigley, bring me the picture of the house in Belfonte!" Wrigley ran to the pantry and retrieved the photograph out of the quick grits and tossed the picture to me. It exploded in mid-air above Edward and I. Sadly as fragments of the photograph of the house in Belfonte flitted to the ground Edward died in my arms. The milieu had finally over come his is obtuse nature.