



Summer 2005

The Forum: Summer 2005

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Recommended Citation

Chilian, Lauren; Fong, Tera; Walker, Sarah; Bold, Jeremy; Graten, Erienne; Swenson, Derek; and Thomas, Bernie, "The Forum: Summer 2005" (2005). *UND Publications*. 42.
<https://commons.und.edu/und-books/42>

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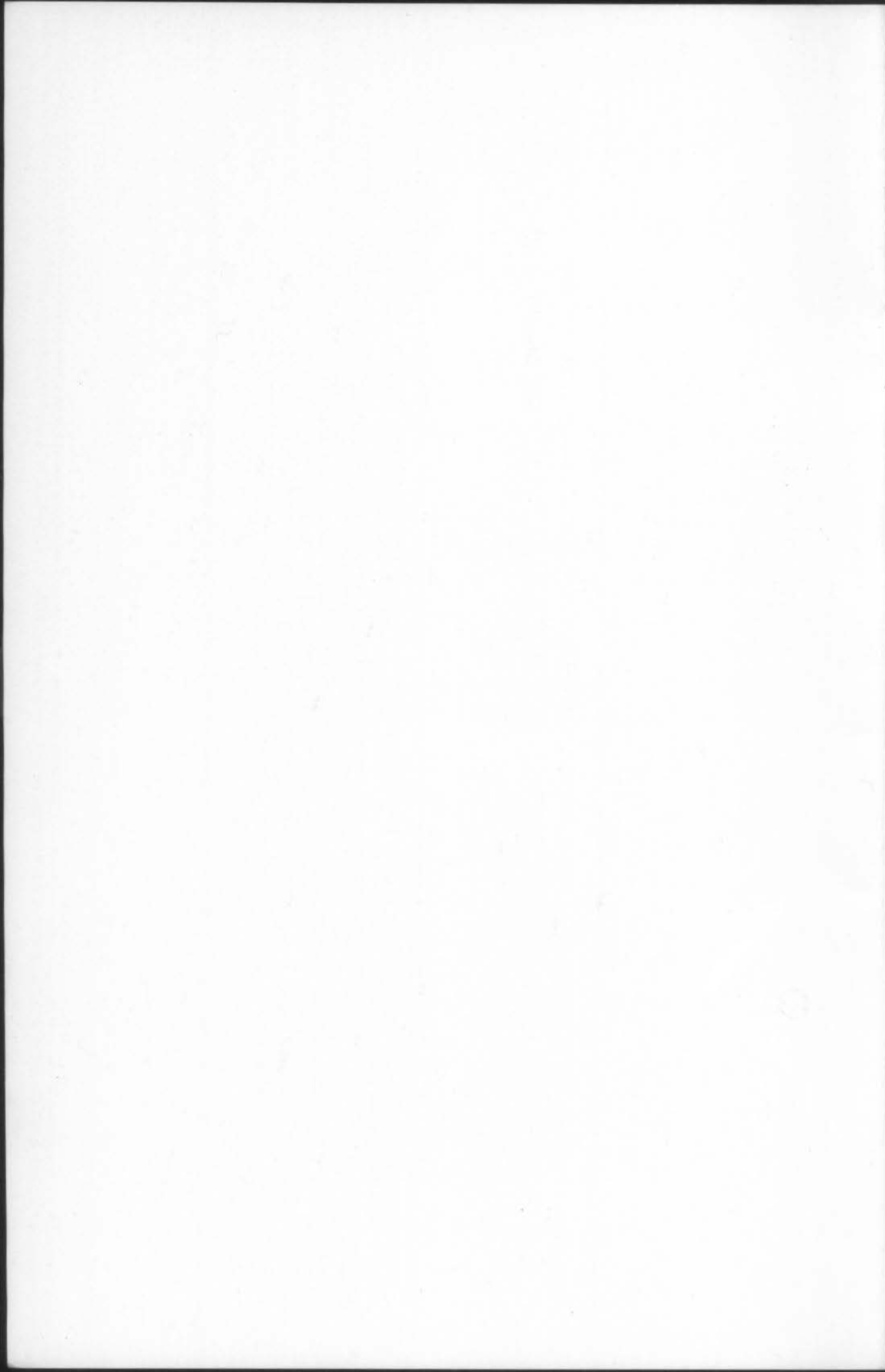
Lauren Chilian, Tera Fong, Sarah Walker, Jeremy Bold, Erienne Graten, Derek Swenson, and Bernie Thomas

the Forum

Journal of the Honors Program
University of North Dakota

Volume 35, Issue 3
Summer 2005





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Tera Fong

The Best Years of Our Lives

Another Friday night
Another nameless college party
Where the characters are the same as they were the night before.
Upper-class guys in polo shirts deliver flattery
To freshman girls beside them on the futon.
They lock tongues
While the conversation in the kitchen
Switches from sex to school and back again.
And the dining room table's littered with playing cards and empty glasses.

The best years of our lives,
Or so they say,
But they've been selling that one since eighth grade
When there were no bills to pay
And only little hearts to break.
So if this is as good as it gets,
Give me a beer
Because who wants the sobering thought
Of knowing the next sixty years
Just spiral downward from here?



Sara Walker

Jeremy Bold

The World's a Stage...

T

he world's a stage...

We were standing at the edge of reason, the edge of a cliff that hung out defiant of gravity by hanging out dramatically from the steady mass of granite rock and terminating in an astoundingly straight edge over the abyss beyond. I can hear my yelling again,

You've got to jump, Sophia! It's the only logical choice, the only sane decision you can make. He hit you, Sophia. There's no excuse for that. Now get ready. I'm fucking serious here! Maybe my mom thinks I'm crazy. It's been three years and first thing she tells me is "get a job." That school killed me, Sophia and I can't let it happen to you. Where the fuck are you going? I'll pull you down and drag you over here if you don't stop.

There now. Are you happy? Well I'm not. Why won't you just listen to me once? know its like you to be quiet and listen to your friends but that's not what you're doing here, not with me, you are just staring at the ground. Look at this gravel here. Dirty brown, huh. Is this more important to you? Is it? I don't believe this.

Jesus fasted in a desert Sophia, what did I do? I can fast, I can fast all day and night and my parents still say that I'm crazy. Should I be reading or taking in the daily matinee? Mom still offers money for the daily matinee and I took it from her to pull out my lighter

for the daily matinee and I took it from her to pull out my lighter and set it flaming. She hauls me down; soon uncle tom will come in for a talk.

Why are you doing this, junior? Why do you have to be such a burden on Marie? Don't you fuckin' talk back to me you little prick I'll cook your balls for breakfast fuckin' cock.

Yes, yes, Sophia we all know you want to cry but how about some peace here, pipe down. Don't try to cry for me now. Don't try when I'm gone.

They say I'll be going to a better place sometime. After some thrashing and burns they are still trying to sober me up; toughening my skin for a happy life on the boulevard. I still like to smell the flowers, but they say I'm allergic.

This is the day to do it though. Look up, Sophia. There's a sun covered in clouds, trees shedding bark to the ground; and this fuckindirt colored platform. Look I am a diver, Olympic first-timer, gold medal winner going for the plunge. Oh, he is a Cinderella story folks. Look at this man, this peak physical condition. Where can there ever be such an athlete as he? And lets give a big hand for this great hero's accomplishments.

I told you this is how it would turn out. I said to myself at thirteen this would be it. I told you then that life doesn't go past eighteen. My lifelong goal to drink responsibly never came true. And it's all those typewriter's faults. Teachers, typewriters, all lined up one after another copying down the same old script, the same old puns, the same old climax and downfall. Tragedies were always best but Shakespeare overworked himself; why would he spend so much time constructing complexity into depression when all they needed to do was die.

Here's a nice big toothpick. You know Achilles might have called it a crude spear. Now all I can think of is the enormous olive it would hold. Imagine it impaled and juicing, what a feeling that olive must have for its missing heart and blood now spilling down the wood.

Sophia. Sophia. I need you. I need you to know something. I am

heterosexual. I am male. I am Caucasian, white all to the bone. I watch television everyday. I eat meat: hamburgers, thanksgiving turkey. I buy vegetables in cans because it's cheaper. I've even sat on those benches in the park, the ones they make for people to sit on and paint green with the same tone everywhere in the city.

They told me it's just a stage. Oh yes it's just a phase you will go through at this time, like puberty and it will pass as you get older. But Sophia I don't want to get older. I don't want to live longer. If I stayed home to do this with alcohol they would take me to an IV at the hospital, vaccinations and vitamins.

I can hear the wind whistling now. The breeze is prickling on my body and I oh so have to take off these jeans, this sweater, these socks and these black shiny shoes. The sun is bright and cold without underwear so I'll take that off too.

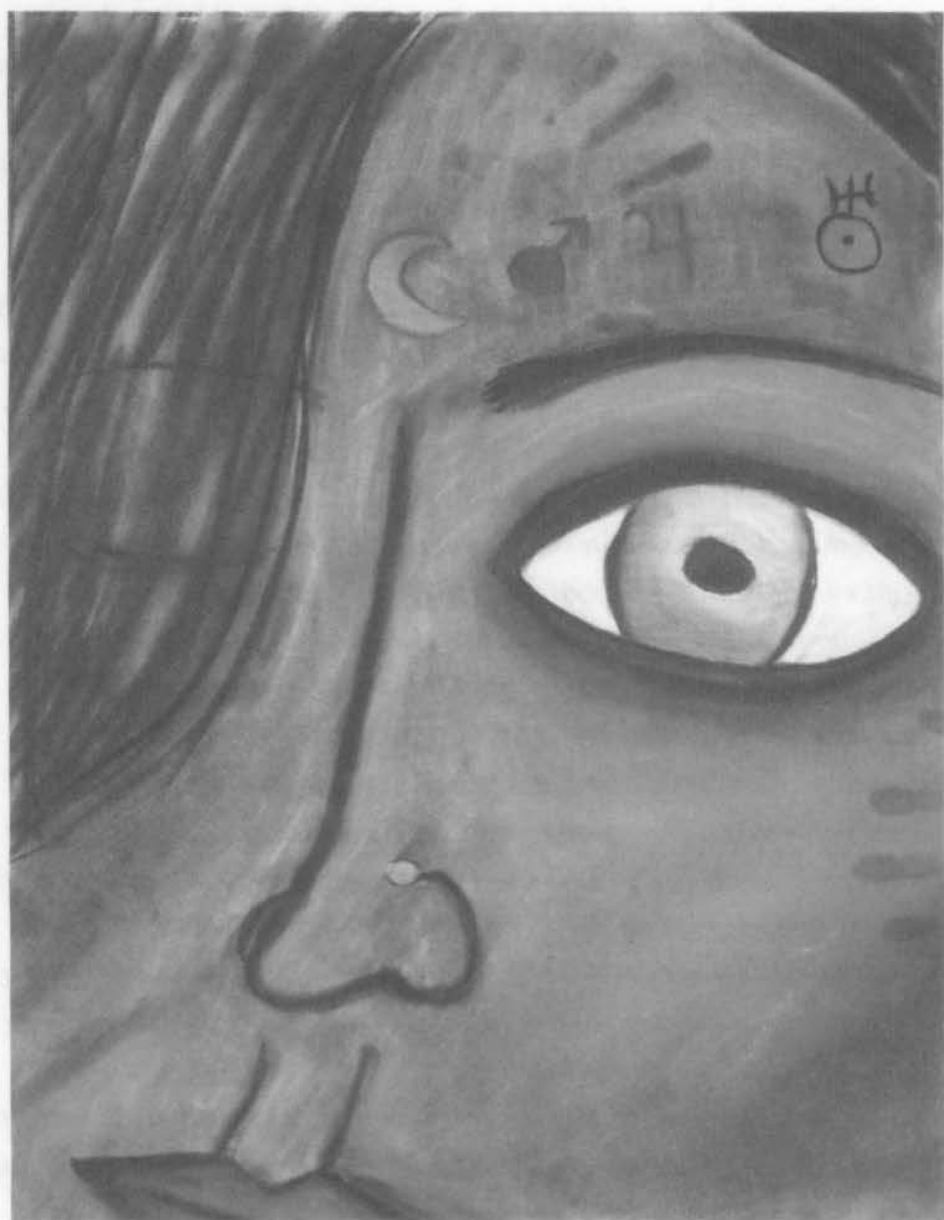
You wanted these too? You wanted to take this from me, to cut it off and make me safe. Sterile, incompetent, a censored statue; well I hold my dick out in front of me with both hands!

Sophia. Sophia, I am sorry. Are you hurt? I do not feel well any more. This wind chills my knees and I pissed all over my legs. Do you have a towel? No, wait, I'm sorry again. I won't ask you for anything. You've done your part.

When I asked you to come celebrate my birthday, I didn't mean like this. I wanted to start the war, the revolution, but today is not the day. It's the worst day I've ever seen. And it's cold out too, hah. What should we do now? I can't think of anything anymore. Let's go back to your house; we can watch the evening news. I'm sure things have calmed down since the election.

Yes, Sophia, I see it. It's so black down there, out there. I can't tell if it is just the light in my eyes, but it looks like it goes forever. It could lead us to hell, or heaven. But I would think we could see the fires from here.

Well I haven't seen a drop of water since we walked here. Is this a desert? Tell you what, I won't ask for the angels if you won't.



Erienne Graten

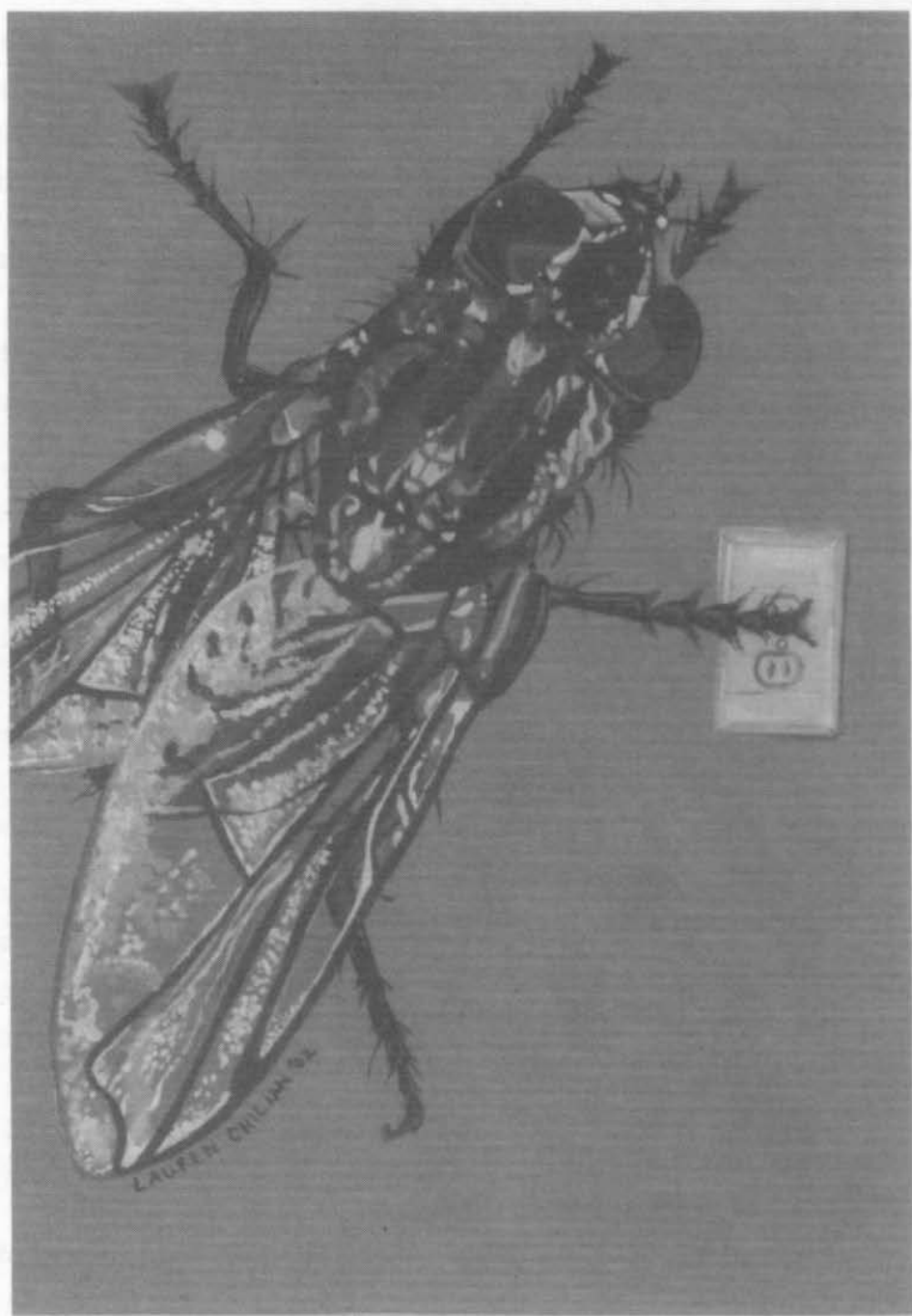
Derek Swenson

The Play

I am in a bind right now
I've got this problem across the table
It's an ugly one – the unsavory type. He smells bad.
And, man! This chair is uncomfortable – this can't be good for my back...
Shifting is not permissible here though – nuh uh –
I just can't show any weakness, so no wriggling allowed
'Cause Baldy's leering at me closer now
He probably smells fear (despite himself)
My German Shepard, Brutus, could do that too
Neat trick.
So, uh, calm? Yeah, I'm calm. For sure.
Sweat glistens on my forehead—
And puddles conveniently in my tear ducts. Ow...
Calm? Nevermind.
And Baldy? Oh, he just sits there and waits
As they say, Baldy has got all day
It's fair though—I tried to make my play
But the big fella here—
Well, as they also say, he *looks* stupid...
And he flipped it back at me
Of course. I mean, don't they always? Really.
So he's got my figurative nuts now
The prick.
Now I gotta get my figurative nuts back. Like, fast.
Before he gets the real nuts. Then, as *I* like to say, problems abound.
But, damn, it hurts already. Honestly hurts—the hurt is not figurative—
Knowing he has got you beat...it's pain that humbles
It's the hurt that makes your brain cold and your chest hot
You sweat, shake, and tingle...
And are sincerely pissed off.
What truly sucks is you can't show it, even unconsciously.
'Cause that's just what Baldy is looking for—

The slightest cringe or flinch could do me in
Like I said, he's a Doberman's prick or something—
With those black, beady, knowing eyes...
There is no escaping that penetrating gaze...
Crap, crap, crap, crap, crap. SHIT!!
Man, my heart. Where did ya go, babe...
...No time for that now though
I gotta do something fast—like immediately
'Cause I can't take this forever—Fear eventually betrays, see
And Fear's little minions are working me overtime
So what I'm saying is; lets get this showdown over before I croak.
So I suck in another breath, and open my mouth to speak
Baldy leans forward in greedy anticipation.
"Alright, buddy," I say, "Since it looks like you are ready to play..."
I finally move – pushing a portion of my chips towards the pot
"...I will see your fifty and double. All yours for the take-down pard'."

I grin and look supremely confident.
Oh-please-oh-please-oh-please-oh-please!!!
Baldy raises an eyebrow.
Man, I think I gotta pee. Bluffing does that to you,
I guess.



Lauren Chilian

Jeremy Bold

How Could I Be Homecoming King?

I was dreaming one cool Monday morning, wrapped tightly in blankets. I was dreaming that I was late for class, rushing through the halls. The school was empty and I ran into an empty classroom where the words written in marker across the board said, "Where is Jeremy?" I hurried out of the room to the hall and it was full of students and I ran into Tammy Wingerter who knocked me over. I greeted her but she began laughing down at me and all the students turned and laughed together with her.

When I woke up at 6:14 am, my heart was beating quickly and I jumped out of bed to prepare for school. As I put my last pair of socks on, I realized that it had all been a dream, that I was a freshman at UND, and I laid back in bed thinking: How could such a strange dream appear to be memory even when I was wide awake? Suddenly, I recalled another story from high school and realized that it may have actually occurred.

Noise poured out of the gymnasium door and rushed into the silent cafeteria where a few students were hurrying through their uncompleted assignments for fear that they would be forced back into class if the pep rally ended early. I tried to ignore the crowd clapping and cheering as the girls hypnotized them with their glittered faces and flashing red, white, and blue pompons. I hunched over the smooth lunch table by myself, the smell of the ammonia stinging my nose as I hunted for answers on the third page of a thick book titled, *The Condensed History of Western Philosophy*. Of course, I might have been in AP English discussing the setting of *Heart of Darkness*; the black water of the Congo River vibrating with the sound of girls cheering like invisible birds and a heavy drum beat which squeaked like feet on bleachers as my boat slowly approached the elusive Kurtz. I pushed the image away from my eyes and

reset them on the words, "Descartes believed that his senses failed to prove his existence."

"Bold!" a voice called to me. "Bold!" he shouted standing next to my ear. "Jeremy, they called your name. They called your name, Jeremy! You've gotta go in there!" My eardrums were lost somewhere in between heavy pounding drums and the definition of existentialism I had been repeating to myself, and all that I could respond with was a "huh?"

"The student council is announcing names in there and they just said yours," Tim said—I finally recognized the voice as Tim Daniels, a guy I had known since third grade Sunday school and part of my college calculus class.

"Um, sure. Okay," I said as my heart beat began quickly rising. I knew I didn't have enough respect for my school to attend a pep rally unless it was mandatory, but the possibility of one of the student council members repeating my name in front of the whole school was a shot of adrenaline to my body; I began nervously snapping my fingers in both hands as I walked to the open doors. This had never happened before; I don't even know them. Sure well, I know who they are but who am I? I mean, how do they know who I am? "Oh, watch my stuff for me," I turned to say before hesitantly entering the gymnasium.

Preparing my ears for the decibels of an airstrip, I was startled by the sound of deep silence in the gymnasium. It was quiet, like a long pause between breaths, and the hum of the lights and air ducts pushed all the thoughts from my mind. The air was warm and stuffy and my face burned in the heated sight of all my peers. The wall of students rose to the tall ceiling like one side of the Great Pyramid and I covered my face with my hand, pretending to scratch my forehead. "Is Jeremy Bold here?" someone shouted into a microphone.

"Here he is!" another shouted, causing a few in the crowd to chuckle. I saw two girls dressed in green and pink standing at the foot of the mass and walked toward them—it was Jessica Conings, the prettiest girl in school and also the shortest, just four feet tall when dancing on her tip-toes, and Tammy Wingerter, our attractive senior class president who had a tendency to shout everything she said despite the fact that people always listened when she spoke. I averted my eyes as I approached.

"Here you go, Jeremy!" Tammy shouted into the microphone and she tossed me a camouflage patterned shirt which had the very proper noun, HOMECOMING CANDIDATE, emblazoned across the chest. I could see Jessica was cupping something in her left hand as she stepped toward me, pressed two of her fingers into it, and extended the two black tipped fingers up at my face. I flinched as she approached and pulled my head back.

"Don't worry. It's just face paint," she said in a tiny voice. "Now, hold still," she ordered as I bent down and felt her fingers swipe a long bar beneath both my tightly closed eyes.

"First, we're gonna ask each of you a question," Tammy yelled to us in the microphone. I looked around, bewildered for being mistaken for two people, and found the skinny Jenna Wolf hidden behind Tammy. "The question is: If you had to pick a musical instrument, which one would you be?" Everyone grew quieter as they contemplated their answers.

"Well, I guess I would be an electric guitar, because I am a rock girl at heart!" Jenna said, leaning into the microphone with perfect Miss America diction. I laughed a little when I envisioned her behind the scenes at a Miss America competition, where the crowd would never know her notorious inability to explain anything without cussing between every two words. The crowd cheered and whooped with vigor though, giving her all the laud and glory she desired. I knew at this point that I had better come up with a brilliant answer or be prepared to wield Jessica as a shield against the hail of shoes and socks that might follow. Tammy silenced the crowd with her hand and held the microphone in front of her, beckoning that I lean over and give my answer.

"Um...well, I guess I would have to be a..." a what? what would I be? "...a kazoo..." a kazoo? now I was in real trouble, why did I want to be a kazoo? "...because of its versatility...I guess?" I pushed my hand into my hair and felt the sweat gurgling to the surface while I waited for the hour of my judgment.

The crowd laughed loudly. They laughed to themselves and jabbed their elbows at each other's ribcages; they were laughing at my irony. I smiled and looked up to their open mouthed smiles, their smooth teeth

made warm and yellow by the fluorescent lighting.

"Thanks for those great answers guys!" Tammy echoed forcefully above the crowd. I started to walk back to get my things from the lunchroom, but felt Jessica's two small hands firmly grab my arm as I tugged like a fish to swim away. "Now you two get to do the obstacle course!" Tammy cried as the crowd shrieked away with her.

I sat down next to Jenna after she unmercifully crushed me in the obstacle course, knocking me down with a single swing of her pillow in the pillow war which ended the contest. We sat in an empty section of bleachers that bore the strong warning, "RESERVED FOR HOMECOMING CANDIDATES!!" My knees were still bouncing though, and I looked around in agitation, my armpits sweaty with excitement, and I tried to focus on Tammy and Jessica announcing more names and preaching to the mass of students held enrapt by the spectacle. The surreal washed over me in drops of perspiration as I watched each nominee exit the bleachers, perform the same stunts, and sit down near me. Each person I knew by name and face, but had never once conversed with out of my respect for the social code.

The noise in the gymnasium faded and swelled in symmetrical waves with each announcement and race as the games continued. The students took great liberty with this opportunity to let their energy erupt from their mouths and bodies with twisting arms and hoarse screams which turned to babble, shouting louder in attempts to be recognized above the chaotic order of the mob all in long rows. The teachers even encouraged this explosion with their own incursions of raucous sounds and gestures, beating their hands together and against their knees and crying with deep throated calls toward the climax as the janitor stepped into the basketball court that had become an arena—and here I too joined the gushing throng of sound and heat and movement, sucked deep within—where we could see him gesticulating to our mad congregation in a full jumpsuit of screaming pinks, greens and yellows that he could, yes would, throw a basketball, facing backwards, into the hoop at the opposite end and when he threw it—the arc being perfect and the skill incredible—the ball passed through the rim with an unheard swish. It was a circus with a menagerie of exclamations and shrieks leading loudly to an all too early final bell which sounded

the call for the rally's retreat, yet had to be sounded again twice over to calm and disperse that reluctant mass.

In the end, I was seated at that place of honor next to ten women and nine men whom I had no connection to whatsoever. I could see the beautiful faces around me, each of us robed in a garment that should have hidden the subject from sight, but was intended to recognize us above all the others. The teachers asked for a picture and I was in no position to refuse; so with the adrenaline still blowing through my brain, I joined a group of men and women whom I had aesthetically admired from afar since junior high. The picture was probably the best taken of me yet, for even though I was uncomfortable with my company, my glands were saying "yes, yes, yes" and telling my face to show it.

In the silent bathroom, I looked at my face in a mirror where streams of black paint streaked down across my sweaty cheeks. I felt a strong desire to take off the honorary shirt, which looked silly over top of a blue polo shirt, and wash the makeup off, so that I could resume my normal status. What did it mean that I was nominated? Am I beautiful by association? Who was I now? My mind flashed back to my book of philosophy and I could not remember what I'd read.

I became a required participant in all the homecoming activities that followed that week: pie-eating contests, ice-cream eating contests, and something involving licorice rope. On the final day, a coronation was held for the king and queen. I wondered if I should mark the date on my calendar when the unthinkable might happen. Was I the Marxist revolutionary that might upset the student political administration? Was I the fool who could become Homecoming King and upset the social balance? I certainly didn't expect to win, nor did I want to be the leader of that revolution, and when the decision was handed down that Robert Frank, football team captain, and Tammy Wingerter were the new king and queen, I was not at all disappointed. I took my rented tuxedo back to the boutique and carried the honorary T-shirt up to my room to my closet. I found the spot in the corner where I kept my academic plaques, placed it on top and left to attend the homecoming football game as just another kid, to whoop and yell for my school's team for the first time.

Blind Crystal
—
No. 12



Bernie Thomas

Jeremy Bold

A Compliment

I was slapped by a girl in the middle of the street today.
She used her strong right hand, and there is still
A bright red pigment on my face.
It might have been,
Because I told her,
I thought her breasts were cute.

I did mean cute as in small.
But I really meant cute as in small and perfect,
so perfectly round that they were absolute beauty.
Cute in the way I would love to cradle them against my chest,
the way I would wrap them in a white towel
if they were wet and shivering,
the way I would speak to them with a hushed voice.

She stomped away from me,
a gust of wind flapping the navy blue dress suit she wore.
But before she entered the office building,
she turned her face to me again
with the tiniest smile on the side of her red lipped mouth.



Sara Walker

Dear Forum Readers,

We hope you have enjoyed this issue of the Forum. Our goal is to encourage good writing and creative expression among Honors students. Share your talent by having your work published in the Forum. Just follow these simple steps when submitting written work or photographs:

1. Print a hard copy of your work.
2. Save it to disk as a text (.txt) file.
3. Complete a Submission Release Form.
4. Drop the above three items in a submission drop box found either in the Honors lounge or in the mailboxes.

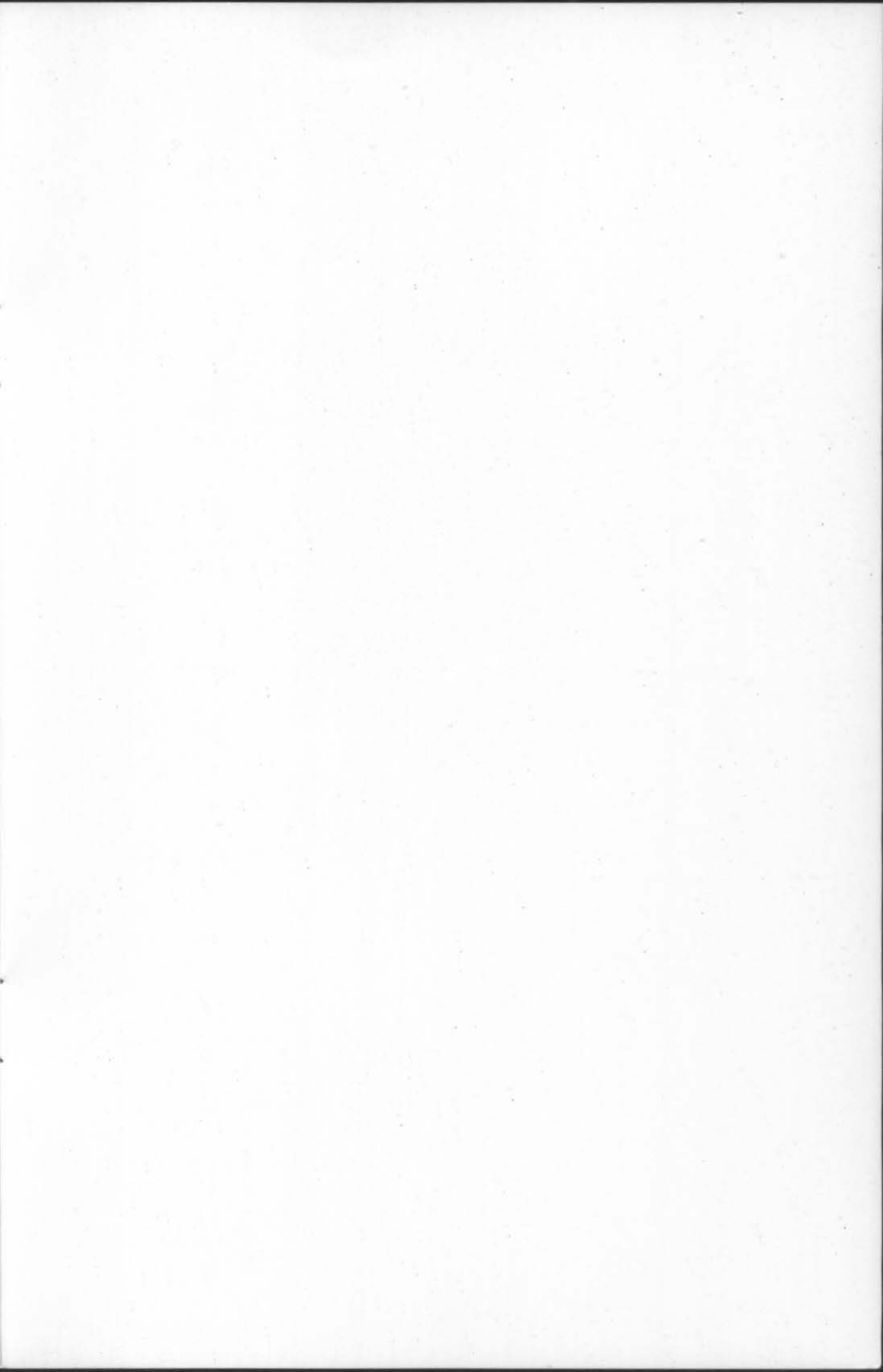
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2. Include your name and phone number on the back of your artwork.
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Thank you,

the Forum Editorial Board



the Forum

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