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Transformative Technology & the Creative Process: Employing a Website as a Vehicle for Literary Work

Baer William Bradford
University of Tennessee - Knoxville

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UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL

Name: Baer William Bradford

College: Arts & Sciences Department: English

Faculty Mentor: Michael R Fitzgerald

PROJECT TITLE: Transformative Technology & the
Creative Process: Employing a Website as a
Vehicle for Literary Work

I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

Signed: Michael R Fitzgerald, Faculty Mentor

Date: 12/15/00

Comments (Optional):

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this report is to present literary works (poems, screenplays and short stories) I have produced during college on the Internet, and to systematically study the process of writing and presenting creative works using transformative technology. The purpose of this is to discover the cost and benefits of using modern technology in the creative process. Word processors were used to write the literary works while text editors, converters and processors, along with HTML and Javascript editors, were used to present them on a webpage. Comparing the complications and advantages that ensued in both editing processes with preexisting critiques of these processes provides a study of these approaches to the creation and presentation of creative works. The conclusions of this report are specific to creative literary works not analytical or experimental works. Despite changes and complications in the writing process, the use of these technologies is effective and points towards the usefulness of other technologies in literary writing.

Transformative Technology & the Creative Process:
Employing a Website as a Vehicle for Literary Work

by

Baer William Bradford

A Baer Truth Production

for

University Honors 458: Senior Honors Seminar

Professor: Dr. Thomas Broadhead

Introduction

Mike Sharples says, “New technology is changing not only the way we write but the very nature of writing” (187). In the process of creating the works presented on this page and in the production of the page itself I found this to be true. Certain costs and benefits, that are discussed in this report, such as the steep learning curve of HTML and the ability to quickly rewrite, affected my writing at all times. There has been much written on the importance of how this technology changes the creative process but, “for all the critical hand-waving and hand-wringing about interactive narratives being reader-centered, fewer than a dozen articles have ever deigned to give the experiences of reading them so much as a cursory glance” (Douglas 3). Due to this, my research material emphasizes the process of writing as effected by technology, although a few more recent examples of success stories in online creative endeavors are mentioned. By studying the effects of transformative technology on my personal creative process, through the production of this website containing the creative works I wrote while at UTK, I hope to prove that despite changes and complications in the writing process these technologies are effective and beneficial to the writer.

Processes: Benefits and Costs

In the process of writing my creative works, while at the University of Tennessee, I have found it is true that “a computer can simulate all previous writing tools, from pen and scrolling papyrus to typewriter, transforming and extending these into a new writing environment” (Sharples 187). Mike Sharples describes four steps, established by M.C. Pennington in 1996, that word processing takes towards enhancing the learning person’s writing skills. He says, “The initial effect of using a word processor ... is that children find it easier to write” (189). This was true for me because the process of writing is easier when you can do things such as edit without retyping a whole document, print out a draft to mark on, and send yourself a file via email to work on at another computer. As you look through my poems and short fiction you will find that there are numerous drafts of many of them, this was made possible by being able to store the data and edit it easier.

“After ‘writing easier’ comes ‘writing more’” says Sharples (189). This is also true, for when you enjoy writing, when it is less of a task, your papers grow in length. Narratives become easier to manage because you are not limiting yourself based on the fact that you might have to retype the paper if it has an error. An example of writing more is Final1 in the Screenplays section of my literature collection. Final2 is an example of being able to edit a draft without retyping an entire creative work. I have found that “writing on computer has become a seamless combination of adding and deleting” (Sharples 188).

“The next stage shows a qualitative change, to ‘writing different’. Children move away from first making a plan and then composing the text from start to finish towards

more of a Discovery approach. They begin to evolve the text, inserting words or sentences into the middle of the draft” (Sharples 190). You can see this in my various revised copies of Talent, listed in the short story section. This short story evolved primarily as a result of the ease of editing made available by word processing. Again Sharples points out that, “Children develop their work over a number of sessions and they begin to adopt a mature cycle of composing, reflecting and revising” (190).

“Then, as they learn how to revise on the screen, they reach the fourth stage of ‘writing better’” (Sharples 190). You can see this improvement if you compare early to late drafts of my stories and poems and in particular if you compare 100 and 300 level class works to later 400 level materials. While having had more training certainly attributed to my improved writing, I am positive that the word processor allowed me to open up more in my later classes. It is easier for me to type out painful or thought provoking ideas because typing is quicker. Second-guessing can take place easier when works are handwritten because of the amount of time it takes to write out the text. Word processing allows for a more freeform creative process.

Sharples states that, “The new electronic texts exist neither in a visible form nor in a single place” (Sharples 202). This is important in my works because it has provided me the opportunity to edit my stories much easier and to sort my stories, for instance cataloging them on this site, without retyping every single one of them. Indeed, “The computer has taken away that laborious process by separating the text from the page” (Sharples 188).

Dennis Baron tells the following story about the early twentieth century education system: “Teachers preferred pencils without erasers, arguing that students would do

better, more premeditated work if they didn't have the option of revising. The students won this one...: eraserless pencils are now extremely rare" (31). This is because teachers and students alike discovered what I have experienced; the ease of using a word processor allows one to write better. Sharples says, "Children develop their work over a number of sessions and they begin to adopt a mature cycle of composing, reflecting and revising" (190). This process of revision is wonderfully helpful for the aspiring creative writer.

However, there are challenges to be had due to this new technology. These challenges for me came from either the writing process or the process of presenting the page. "Most recent word processors are able to revise text automatically as you write, correcting errors and expanding contractions" but a problem occurs which "is as simple to state as it is difficult to rectify: current programs have no deep knowledge of language. They treat text simply as a string of words" (Sharples 190). Therefore, although the newest versions of word processors are better at checking for errors they still make mistakes. They particularly pose a problem when they try to capitalize words that you do not want capitalized or when they correct the spelling of people's names, such as Sharples, or when the format of your page keeps changing when you press return.

My particular problem with this project was with the development of the webpage, a problem I did not expect. Here is a short list of things I came across:

- 1) Needed a way to turn off the extraneous information in the browser and size the window.
- 2) I lost fonts that were used on another machine, thus the writing did not look like the original (see: PaAlways).

- 3) Wrapping text in poems and loss of formatting occurred (see: Found.pdf).
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Many of these problems were solvable by converting the works original Word file into an Acrobat file for correct viewing. In some cases time became an issue and I had to put off the implementation of a specific detail, for instance I still want to be able to turn off the capability people have of copying and pasting info in any way. Over all however the ends are worth the struggle it takes to learn new technology and the benefits therefore outweigh the costs.

Practicality

Many researchers of literary technique and technology “are analyzing the new in terms of the old” (Sharples 187). They do not create a new model by which to study particular works, they use the models they use to study classic or modern literature, at best labeling the texts postmodern and analyzing them from that point of view. What they fail to see is that while “writing will still be valued in the new millennium ...we may come to write in very different ways” (Sharples 188).

Indeed, “multimedia authoring demands new skills, of media integration, interactivity design and web production” (Sharples 205). However, Sharples points out that, “Pennington’s study does reveal the virtues of writing on a computer. Using a word processor makes revising easier, which encourages children [to spend] more time on revision, which may then lead them to read over their text and to develop a more reflective approach to writing” (Sharples 190). Therefore, while the final product of transformative technologies effects on literature may not be fully understood at least the process of writing has been researched sufficiently to justify the use of these technologies by writers.

Tyner says, “While the purpose for technology education may be job readiness, the purpose for arts teachers who use media tools with students is to foster self-expression, creativity, and to find their own “voice”” (Tyner 157). In my case transformative technology was useful in this endeavor and once the learning curve is overcome it was very practical to proceed with using technology in this way.

Conclusion

Douglas, J. Yellowlees says, “Sven Birkerts in *The Gutenberg Elegies* and Laura Miller in the *New York Times Book Review* admit to—as Miller puts it—“meandering” through one and three [interactive narratives], respectively” (3). Now it is impossible for a book reviewer to ignore technologically enhanced texts when major authors such as Stephen King are publishing some of their works in audio or acrobat format only. Stuart Moulthrop says:

If this is a story about the fate of publishing, it has one obvious message: *I have seen the future and it takes work*. Copious amounts of work. “Hypertextual literacy” seems to increase considerably the responsibilities of those who produce, evaluate, and disseminate texts. Pilgrims who cross the river of culture seeking a promised land of productivity may be in for a rude arrival. (422)

But now major computer companies and internet businesses such as Microsoft, amazon.com and Barnes & Noble are well invested in these technologies and that nearly assures their use in the coming years. Therefore, while learning the processes of using technology in creative writing may be hard, it has possibly also become requisite to the creative process, at the very least in word processing. Indeed, Dennis Baron points out that, “As for the no-crossing-out rule, writing teachers now routinely warn students that writers never get it right the first time, and we expect them to revise their work endlessly until it is polished to perfection” (31). Regarding my own works, while actually presenting my texts online is a strenuous task it is rewarding, and my work has certainly

been well affected by the advancement in modern word processing technology. Truly, the technology available today and in the future is very useful for the creative writer.

Future plans for this site are to continually add my other creative works, advertise in a writing based community, integrate this site into my own site www.bethnbaer.com once I have implemented security to the menus so that people cannot view the source code of the site, and perhaps add a purchasing area where people can buy online books and other interactive media such as games. The usefulness of transformative technology is varied and this site is a first step in various directions for me.

Bibliography

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Report

GO

English 363

GO

English 365

GO

English 101

GO

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Microsoft
Internet
Explorer

Directions for Using This Page

The drop down menus on the right contain links to the report sections and my various literary works. Select the section or work you want to read and then click GO, your selection will open in another window. The report refers to various works of mine which you may reference, or you may read my works separately from the report.



*this universe was designed by the inane mind of Baer William Bradford
A Baer Truth Production
for The University of Tennessee: Honors Program*

Last updated: Wednesday, November 13th 2000 (1 days ago)

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Introduction

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My Poems: English 363

Dead On Arrival

Don't you hate it when
One holds their head in their hands
And can't write a poem.

Don't it make you sick
Or just piss you off badly
And make your gut churn.

Don't tell me about
Opening up to free verse
At times like this one.

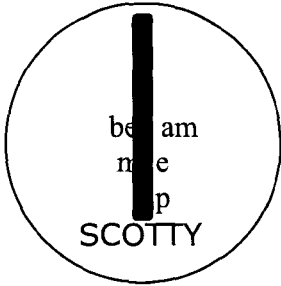
Here is the damn poem, now leave me the haiku alone.

Baer William Bradford
English 363 – Poem 9
Sunday, November 29, 1998

Excalibur

He unsheathes the solid steel rod and
takes the mighty sword in hand.
A dangerous foe is the siren and
only a weapon such as this will do.
A slight poking at first and
her liquids flow forth from the jab.
He is tempted by her salty tongue and
takes the shaft, thrusts it deep within.
She moans as it penetrates her soft flesh and
screams as the sword becomes liquid steel.
His weapon is melted by her heat and
her song is silenced by his blade's stroke.

Baer William Bradford
English 363 – Poem 2
Wednesday, September 23, 1998



They paint the walls to hide my pen

But the shithouse

You're a fuck

poet strikes again

I AM THE
LIZARD KING
I CAN DO
ANYTHING

J.M.

ART
MAJORS
ARE
FAGS

**YOU SHOULD
TRY AND BE
MORE NARROW
MINDED**

~~you~~ you all
th~~is~~ to ~~be~~ in
h~~is~~ Biology do
mon~~ster~~
th~~is~~ the purpose of the
anus~~is~~
Rock ~~is~~
~~is~~ Neither.

CLINTON SUCKS

I can't
beleeeve
you speld
college
rong-yoo FOOL!

**WHY DOES EVERYONE
HAVE TO HATE SOMEONE
ELSE**

**YES
CLINTON
SUCKED
BUT HE**

Those who yell queer
The loudest sure are.

**DIDNT SWALLOW
LIWINSKI DID!**

**WHAT KIND OF A N
S SHOLE PAINTS OVER
SUCH FINE PIECES OF
CLASSIC SHITTER
LITERATURE**

**Ch-ch
ch-ch
Chia
Head**

**R-U
GIVING
HEAD?**

Lobster Teeth

Waking to the curtain swaying, and looking across the chamber.
There is a demon lurking, silent stalking, sitting in the corner.

Vampiric teeth reaching forward, disembodied hands searching slowly.
Hands are holding lobster claws, clipping claws coming closer.

Jumping out of rest and into quick chase, leaving this safe place.
Vampire hides and is simply forgotten, while walking through downtown.

Outside the sky dripping scarlet dusk and the pub nearby inviting.
These rustic buildings, feeling out of place yet the swinging sign summons.

Taking a few beers and then attiring to the smoking room.
There the barber awaits, ready to give a slow sleek shave.

Blade coming closer, but perhaps not a blade, perhaps a pick.
Perhaps a dentist, a dark demon dentist, a deathly pale profession.

Indeed a vampire of pain with lobster claws for pliers.
Reaching in with claws of pain, pulling teeth of the one restrained.

Ropes chaff but to no avail. Teeth are removed, blood everywhere.
Vampire seeks this, takes of the roots and quenches his thirst.

Lobster claws clasp white pearl teeth with blood dripping.
A body left to drip then dry, vampire seeking more victims, more game.

Baer William Bradford
English 363 – Poem 1
Thursday, September 10, 1998

Modern Lighthouse

Security wrapped in cold bars of steel.
This enclosure blocks some bright rays,
Keeps them from the frantic eyes of the insecure.

Those bars of light that escape the silent steel,
The ones that emanate above your unprotected heads,
These sharp beams radiate out in an effort to protect you.

Azure light placed above a message
Three times written, a statement to you in time of need.
“Emergency,” you listen to its heed or rather read and run.

Race to the blue beam that is placed above.
Reach out your frantic hand as you try to embrace it.
Come to the protector, the lighthouse for new dangers.

Come to the blue light placed in stark darkness,
Placed on high, on a volunteer hued pole of shelter.
Thrust your hand upon a bleeding button of “Emergency.”

A sanguine button not a moment too soon,
Bright orange lighthouse in dark decade of danger,
Light blue light of security in steel bars, will it save you?

The Ring

When I received her message on the net,
Because of distance I wanted to balk.
Then she, slowly, she convinced me to talk.
And soon, without the phone between, we met.
Seems I would not open her my soul yet.
Though, as the day, and we, wore on in walk
She slowly yet opened me up to talk.
Thus she, through me, did make our hearts true set.
As we breath day by day our hearts we hold.
And during hot slow days, our future talk
About our plans unveils a ring I give.
Our feelings grow, and so our loving bold.
Though, as they grow, and we to future walk,
We know and see the ring, and so we live.

Baer William Bradford
English 363 – Poem 8
Wednesday, November 18, 1998

Those Summer Wednesdays

Tuesdays too when I stayed up way too late
and next morning had bad sweats from the heat,
then with stomach aching
from eating too little the night before
I got up. No one ever stopped me.

I woke and got ready for work, it sucked bad.
Fixing hardware is fun, but
not when you have to walk in heat,
and faculty members have chronic ‘tudes.

Speaking nicely to them,
those with hearts so cold it burns
and can get you fired if they want.
What did I know, what did I know
of their austere and lonely offices.

With These Hands

They don't know me or understand me,
And they can't see inside my fake heart.
I cry real tears for the ones I've lost.

My father taught me everything I need to know,
And he gave me a heart and a brain and life.
But he left me not quite done.
With his hands he gave me mine,
But scissors just won't work all the time.

They don't understand me even though I tried.
They are scared of my torn body.
They can't understand that my love is real.
I am not a fake, I am not Frankenstein.

I think this as I clip away my days.
Sculpting ice that falls as snow.

I wonder if she thinks of me.

Written for Her

I have written poems for quite a few girls,
And for each of them it was the same.

For the poem I put my soul on the line,
But after long it reads very lame.
For the girl I put my love on the line,
But looking back the feeling is tame.

When I write one of these for you my dear,
Please understand my love's not insane.
When we break apart do not ever fear,
Please do not ever lay any blame.

Because whenever I write you a poem,
It is not ever meant as a game.
Because when I write a line of that poem,
It is written in only your name.

But sometimes the most passionate feelings
Only have 15 minutes of fame.

Written for Her

I have written poems for many girls.
And for each one it was the same.

For the poem I put my soul on the line.
But after long it reads very lame.
For the girl I put my love on the line.
But looking back the feelings are tame.
When I write a poem for you my dear.
Please understand my love is not insane.
When we break apart and you look back.
Please do not lay any blame.
Because when I wrote you a poem.
It was not ever meant as a game.
Because whenever I wrote a line for you.
It was written in only your name.

But sometimes the most passionate feelings.
Only have 15 minutes of fame.

Baer William Bradford

My Poems: English 463

Blackberry Thorns

Sitting under the blackberry bushes that have curled into a canopy under the weight of
their own sweetness

Scott and I only five and six, sweating after running through the forest full of sugary
honeysuckle and shiny sumac

He's there across from me, young and sweating, the duplex where I'll live for nine years
of my life looms twenty feet from the underbrush.

A month later my parents ask me blatantly "Why do you stay out there so long, and why
do you look so guilty?"

I promised them he never actually showed me it, and he never did, but they thought I
ought not play with Scott anymore, and I didn't.

Ashamedly I wish he had shown me, I would have shown him, I promise.

Tuesday, March 09, 1999

Clockwork Orange Screw

We are monetary slaves building a
fourway highway to the coliseum where big black men
beat each other up
under the whip of monetary slaves building a big orange
media frenzy.

We are a cluster fucking batter of different skin tones,
making sure we keep our
big black men pure so
they can bring in more big bucks,
a little bit of which pays the teacher
that hones the words I churn
the words I expose to children of big orange fans.

We are screwed by the
Big Orange Republic
of the United Starlings of America.
Shit covered and screaming in ecstasy as,
Oh baby, give me six,
more days until migration and our the turds fly away and it's just
thirty more weeks until
touchdown time.

We are orange,
we are the rock covered in an opaque fog
beamed down daily from a beacon
a clockwork cluster of star children.
And Neyland and Stanley and Henson are dead.
But the orange and the bomb and the Muppets live on.

Thursday, March 25, 1999

Clockwork Orange Screw

We are monetary slaves building a
fourway highway to the coliseum where
big men beat each other up
under the whip of monetary slaves building
a big orange media frenzy.

We are a cluster fucking batter of different
skin tones, making sure we keep our
big men pure so
they can bring in more big bucks,
a little bit of which pays the teacher
who hones the words I churn
words I expose to children of big orange fans.

We are screwed by the
Big Orange Republic
of the United Starlings of America.
Shit covered and screaming in ecstasy as,
Oh baby, give me six,
more days until migration and the turds fly away
it's just thirty more weeks until
touchdown time.

We are orange,
we are The Rock covered in an opaque fog
beamed down daily from a beacon
a clockwork cluster of star children.
Neyland and Kubrick and Henson are dead.
And so am I.

Discomfort - Tuesday, January 18, 1999

Baer William Bradford
Tuesday, January 18, 1999

Discomfort
Fills this room
As it does nearly
Every night.
How we escape the

Rough
Edge

Of ev-er-y day,
I'll never know.

Sometimes I feel like
We're shackled to life.
But we know we're
Holding on.
At least that much brings comfort.

Don't You - Tuesday, February 23, 1999

Baer William Bradford
Tuesday, February 23, 1999

Don't You

Don't ever raise your voice at me.

Why won't he calm down and listen, and listen, *I'm talking?*

He should listen to reason, listen to the words of Jesus, to me.

Don't you curse at me.

He doesn't respect me or Kay, or you or her or you or me.

He thinks he is better than everyone. *You don't care about anyone.*

Don't interrupt me when I am talking to you.

He won't be quiet. *Just be quiet.* Won't stop talking for a second.

I wish he'd just leave me alone, just leave this house, just leave my life.

Calm down!

Why won't he get out of here?

No, he should stay and calm down, and calm down, and *calm down!* and just live by my rules under my roof.

Don't You

Don't ever raise your voice at me.

Why won't he calm down and listen, and listen, *I'm talking?*
He should listen to reason, listen to the words of Jesus, to me.

Don't you curse at me.

He doesn't respect me or Kay, or you.
He thinks he is better than everyone. *You don't care about anyone.*

Don't interrupt me when I am talking to you.

He won't be quiet. *Just be quiet.* Won't stop talking for a second.
I wish he'd just leave me alone, just leave this house, just leave my life.

Calm down!

Why won't he get out of here?

No, he should stay and calm down, and calm down, and *calm down!* and just live by
my rules under my roof.

Baer William Bradford
Performance Poem
Monday, February 22, 1999

Excalibur (2.0)

He unsheathes the solid steel rod,
takes the mighty sword in hand.
Such a dangerous foe is the siren,
only this sleek weapon will do.

Ahh, a slight poking at first.
Her liquids flow forth from the jab.
Tempted by her salty tongue he
takes the shaft, thrusting it deep within.

Moaning as it penetrates her soft flesh, she
screams as the sword becomes liquid steel.
His weapon is melted by her heat
and her song is silenced by his blade's stroke.

Baer William Bradford
English 363 – Poem 9
Sunday, November 29, 1998

Excalibur

He unsheathes his steel,
takes the sword in hand.
Such a dangerous foe is siren,
only this sleek weapon will do.

Ahh, a slight poking at first.
Her liquids flow forth from the jab.
Tempted by her salty tongue he
takes the shaft, thrusting it deep within.

She moans as it penetrates soft flesh, she
screams as the sword becomes liquid steel.
Her throbbing melts his blade
its swift stroke silences her song.

Further Dispute

"Who do you think you are?"
Not a lethargic,
Alcoholic, Christian pedant,
Who's hypocritical life
Is a blatant mockery of Christ's.

"You don't care about anyone."
No, 'I just don't care.'
I don't hate Momma,
You, my friends, teachers.
I'm not evil incarnate,
I do what makes me happy.

"You only care about yourself"
Yes.
That's the only way I stay alive.
I feel alive,
I protect myself.

"I'll kick you out of here"
Go ahead, see if I care.
Dammit, no food,
No roof, no family,
No computer.
I hafta stay.

"You've got one more chance."
You know, I know it.
Living under your roof,
Not under my rules.
I'll fuck up,
Again.

Giggle - Tuesday, April 13, 1999

Tuesday, April 13, 1999

Giggle

I slip under the covers next to you, cuddling where it's warm.
Holding you close you start to drift.
When you breath deepest I slip my hand down your back.
"Eek!!" you scream when I touch your butt.
Your wiggle shakes the bed, I giggle uncontrollably.
I grab you close and you kiss me hard.
You fall asleep in my arms and this time I watch you sleep.
Soon I'll slip from your loving arms.
We'll dream of each other all night, until my tickling wakes you.

In Reply to My Father's Rage

"Who do you think you are?"
Not a lethargic,
Alcoholic, Christian pedant,
Who's hypocritical life
Is a blatant mockery of Christ's.

"You don't care about anyone."
No, 'I just don't care.'
I don't hate Momma,
You, my friends, teachers.
I'm not evil incarnate,
I do what makes me happy.

"You only care about yourself."
Yes.
That's the only way I stay alive.
I stay alone,
I protect myself.

"I'll kick you out of here"
Go ahead, see if I care.
Dammit, no food,
No roof, no family,
No computer.
I hafta stay.

"You've got one more chance."
You know it, I know it.
Living in your house,
Under your rules.
I'll fuck up,
Again.

My Son - Tuesday, February 16, 1999

Baer William Bradford
Tuesday, February 16, 1999

My Son

Why does he act this way,
Aloof with no regard for others?
He is uncaring, spoiled.
I know I didn't raise him this way.

He spends his money
Barely thinking about investing in a car.
Such a materialist, now living in sin.
Not Christian at all

He will come to reason.
If they break up I will reach him.
Maybe he is happy.
He can be happier.

My Son

I know I didn't raise him this way,
Uncaring, spoiled, with no regard for others

He spends his money thoughtlessly,
A materialist, living in sin,
Not Christ like.

He will come to reason.
He can be happier.
If he'd study Jesus' life.

Never Us

One more time until I close the door.
One more time 'til it's no more.
Get out of my life I'll say to you.
Get out of my life we were never true.
I'll stop this, I'll stop this, I'll stop this façade
We can't do this, we can't do this sinful thing.
Enough of this, no more, there is no more us and there never was.
You will know and I will know,
But your husband will never know, and that is why there never was an us.

One More Time

One more time until I close the door.
One more time 'til it's no more.
Get out of my life I'll say to you.
Get out of my life we were never true.
I'll stop this, I'll stop this, I'll stop this façade
We can't do this, we can't do this sinful thing.
Enough of this, no more, there is no more us and there never was.
You will know and I will know,
But your husband will never know, and that is why there never was an us.

Pa Always

You do that all the time

I don't do anything ALL the time

You know what I mean

Then say it, don't exaggerate

I'm not, ugh, I'm using hyperbole

Don't, you might as well be lying

I'm not a liar!

What, who's calling anyone a liar

**You said I lied, that's the same as calling me a liar, don't
call me a liar I am not a liar!**

Don't! raise your voice

**WHAT! WHAT you've been yelling at me the whole time
and you expect ME to be quiet**

I don't do anything all the time

What, do what, ack, why do you always do that

Stop exaggerating

Baer William Bradford
Tuesday, January 26, 1999

Pa Always

You do that all the time

I don't do anything ALL the time

You know what I mean

Then say it, don't exaggerate

I'm not, ugh, I'm using hyperbole

Don't, you might as well be lying

I'm not a liar!

What, who's calling anyone a liar

You said I lied, that's the same as calling me a

liar, don't call me a liar I am not a liar!

Don't! raise your voice

WHAT! WHAT you've been yelling at me the

whole time and you expect ME to be quiet

I don't do anything all the time

What, do what, ack, why do you always do that

Stop exaggerating

Plastic Boxes

I sing of computers, which have given me my daily living, a woman, a job,
communication and entertainment.

Keyboards make me long for better interaction, joysticks are too clunky, the mouse a
twenty-five year old design.

Voice would work but over ten million dollars in research hasn't given Bill an answer to
the vocal range.

Nintendo thinks that someday brain waves will do and that idea suits me because I will be
closer to the source.

Coded from zeros-ones, time is marked by beta tests, product releases and the eminence
of whytoque.

Beth feels the importance of this force in her life as well, yet isn't as worried about
millennial turmoil.

We've argued about when to start stocking up water, though deep down I know we worry
about our digital life more.

Backing up our email and WebPages concerns us because these are our memory books,
our photo albums, our love letters.

Not just a processor and storage, rather thoughts and memory, our contemporaries'
emotions are stored in plastic boxes.

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Plastic Boxes

I sing of computers, which have given me my daily living, a woman, a job,
communication and entertainment.
Keyboards make me long for better interaction, joysticks are too clunky, the
mouse a thirty-year-old design.
Voice would work but over ten million dollars in research hasn't given Bill an
answer to the vocal range.
Nintendo thinks that someday brain waves will do and that idea suits me
because I will be closer to the source.
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eminence of whytoque.
Beth feels the importance of this force in her life as well, yet isn't as worried
about millennial turmoil.
We've argued about when to start stocking up water, though deep down I know
we worry about our digital life more.
Backing up our email and WebPages concerns us because these are our
memory books, our photo albums, our love letters.
Not a processor and storage, rather thoughts and memory, my emotions are stored in
plastic boxes.

Tuesday, March 30, 1999

Pushing It Down

Sail away sail away, take a break, don't worry about this poem or this prose.
Take a break take a break, type it down as I think, words mean more from the brain.
Type it down type it down, rhythm from within, my dad hates me but I'll still win.
Rhythm comes rhythm comes, I push it down, she moves at the touch of my skin.
I push down I push down, so much pain written about, I just can't let it all out.
So much pain so much pain, growing up here in town, the doctor said I wouldn't live.
Growing up growing up, escaping shame, I never pushed him too far.
Escaping shame escaping shame, by avoiding truth, someday I'll just write it all down.

Rainbow

I waited until after six everyday for my Pa to pick me up from school.
His van smelled of sawdust, clay from the work site and his sweat.
Driving down Bob Gray Road we would become speechless in unison and
Look over the on coming cars, cedar trees and hazy atmosphere.
For high in the dusk sky there was always a rainbow circling the sun.
“The day you were born, when I took your momma to the hospital, there was a rainbow.
From the interstate you could see it arching right from our apartment to UT hospital.”
My Pa believes I am a miracle.

The Rhythm

The rhythm of my fingers
On the keyboard as I clip along
Sometimes stutters and skips
A pace.

But when my work appears on the screen
It is my heart that does the jumping.
To see my webpage formed from my mindtip
And know that my friends
Trust me with their tech problems
Gives me a reason
To keep
Skipping a beat.

My Rhythm

The rhythm of my fingers
On the keyboard as I clip along
Sometimes stutters and skips
A pace.

But when my work appears on the screen
It is my heart that's jumping.
To see my webpage formed from my mindtip,
And know that my friends
Trust me with their tech problems
Gives me a reason
To keep skipping, a beat.

Tuesday, March 23, 1999

She Breaks Repetition

It doesn't seem a lot to many of us, these repetitive days of classes, work,
homework, sleep, classes.
Beth sits over in her spot on the couch, thinking of me, pretending she is enjoying
the cooking show on TV.
If you knew her like I do you would know that what is most on her mind is me
finishing this poem.
Now she ask, "*How's it coming along?*" "Okay <cough>." "*I'm sorry I'll stop
bothering you.*" "It's okay," I mumble.
She wonders, "*When will he finish, and why did he have to start so late?*" "How's
your hand feeling."
"*Oh, it's hurting.*" She stands fixing herself a snack near the cake pan she singed
herself on this evening.
As she busies herself I wish she would come give me a hug, but she knows to wait
till I've been typing a while.
Another line and another smile, when I get a block I glance her way, then
over at my bike, the vehicle for my repetition.
Tomorrow I will pack my bag, ride to work, then class. We'll miss each
other.
"*Here's your lunch for tomorrow.*" "Thank you, I'm done with my poem."
"*What's your poem about.*" "You."

Tuesday, March 09, 1999

She Understands

*When your parents treat you like that it cuts me.
I feel it more because you bury your feelings.
You won't let the way you're hurt show visibly.
But I can see the pain in your eyes when
Your dad makes you feel worthless.*

I'm sorry I just can't let those feelings out.
Hopelessness just seems to take over. I can't access . . .

Baby stop it's okay. Let me hold you.

Thursday, March 25, 1999

She Understands

*When your parents treat you like that it cuts me.
I feel it more because you bury your feelings.
But I can see the pain in your eyes when
Your dad makes you feel worthless.*

I'm sorry I just can't let those feelings out.
Hopelessness seems to take over.

Baby stop it's okay. Let me hold you.

Tuesday, April 13, 1999

Us, Never

One more lie 'til it's at an end.
One more time until I close the door. (slam)
Get out of my life.
Get out, we were never in love.

I'll stop this, I'll stop this; (longer pause) I'll stop this façade
We can't do this, we can't purs(ss)ue this s(ssss)iful thing.
There is no us and there never was.
Enough of this, no more.

You will know and I will know,
But your husband will never know,
And that is why there never was an us. (sit down)
(get back up) Even though there was.

What I Wish For

What I Wish For

What I wish for is a new video game to play.
What I crave is a little more time at the computer.
What I want is a little more time in bed with you.
What I need is a longer weekend.
What I desire is your home cooked meals.
What I hope is that you'll keep enjoying time with me.
What we get is more time, what we do with that is up to us.
Together we will enjoy it, me and you.

My Screen Plays: English 365

Home

CHARACTER: August Winters: *Our hero and narrator.*

SCENE: *Dusk. Alley way between a cafe/bakery and a abandoned ware house. Skyline reveals the surroundings are that of a medium sized city. Though out the scene passersby walk in front of the alley, some walk quickly past as though they are afraid of what might come out of the darkness, others steady themselves and pretend they aren't scared at all. Against the cafe wall (left hand side of alley) lies an abandoned box, one that was perhaps used to carry a large appliance. As the lights of the city illuminate the stage we see the box isn't so abandoned after all.*

AUGUST: (coughs with a rasp while pulling himself into a seated position, his head rubs against the top of his "home") Hey you's stop. Come and give an old man a bit to live on. (people continue to walk by though they see there is nothing to be scared of in the alley this evening)

AUGUST: (sighs) No one cares for old August. My life continues to fade and no one stops to pass the time. No one wants to help an old man like me. My kind are a nickel a dozen. (sighs and scratches at the side of the box with his index finger slowly and coughs) Please, someone anyone. Doesn't anyone . . . (sighs) (a young boy walking by tosses him a nickel). Thank you young sir. (the child, a tad frightened, runs off the stage right)

AUGUST: (scratches his box again and puts the nickel in his pocket) Anyone have a dime for a poor old man? (a middle aged man in a business suit is walking by with his lady friend dressed for the opera perhaps) (the man tosses August a dime and chuckles to his lady) (snatches out his hand to grab the dime and falls out of his box) Thank you kind sir. (the man continues walking until he goes off stage right) Thank you sir, thank you. Why this will buy me a whole cup of coffee it will. Keep me warm all through the coming chill. Yes, this is my life's blood. (clouds begin to fill the sky as August pulls himself back into his box)

AUGUST: Does anyone else have a little bit of love left for their elders? Does anyone else have some spare change for one of the good old boys? Perhaps a quarter for my troubles during the war? (scratches his box, this appears to be a reoccurring tic) Can anyone find it in their hearts to help me though the coming chill? (an old man, slightly wizened but with a grandfatherly smile tosses August a quarter as he walks by) (August dives for it but misses and the quarter rolls down a sewer drain)

AUGUST: (sighs) It doesn't really matter anyways. (old man exits stage right) (August lies down in his box, lights fade a tad, a few flakes of snow fall on the top of the box, you hear August snoring as the stage lights go out)

Home

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Labor Day Weekend

JULIE: *late teens, touches hair frequently, blatantly flirting with Andrew, preppy sandals, tired, holding a cup of water*

ANDREW: *just turned 21, slightly intoxicated, preppy cap and sandals, is chewing gum, holding a bottle of water (Naya or something), blatantly not realizing Julie is flirting with him*

SCENE: *dorm lobby, door to lobby upstage right, front desk stage left facing stage right, Julie and Andrew are sitting on a two person couch up center stage, her looking towards him, him laid back in stage left corner of couch, pizza men walking occasionally from door to desk, other students sitting on other chairs and such studying*

ANDREW: *(lights, Andrew already talking)* . . . I was walking by McGee's . . .

JULIE: *(constantly interjects comments)* Oh, yeah.

ANDREW: . . . and I saw my roommate . . .

JULIE: As usual.

ANDREW: . . . I saw my roommate with a couple of his friends and we hung out . . . *(trails off)*

JULIE: What about the next day?

ANDREW: I went home.

JULIE: How far is that?

ANDREW: About an hour 'n a half.

JULIE: What . . . man that must be nice, it's like half a day away for me, my friend's like, "I went home this afternoon." Pisses me off.

ANDREW: Um, yeah and then I saw Jane and did laundry.

JULIE: How was that, how'd it go?

ANDREW: *(thinks)* Oh yeah, we had a good time. By the way why didn't you call me?

JULIE: I only had like three minutes on my phone card.

ANDREW: Okay, so Sunday morning I went to church.

JULIE: With her?

ANDREW: She goes to the same church.

Labor Day Weekend

JULIE: What church?

ANDREW: Nondenominational.

JULIE: (*unusual enthusiastic*) Oh yeah, me too, I, isn't that cool, I mean that's great, don't you think . . .?!

ANDREW: yeah – and I did some other stuff and we watched *Titanic*.

JULIE: (*continues enthusiasm*) Oh, that movie is so good, I – had you seen it before?!

ANDREW: Once – I worked on the lawn then came home (*mumbles something about Becky*)

JULIE: (*calms down, concerned*) I saw Becky just an hour ago coming back from the Strip, she was so gone, her friends were taking her home. Her family, I don't know, her family is psycho.

ANDREW: Psycho? Her family, your mean her parents . . .

JULIE: Well, her family is – well not like her family, more like her step family, you know?

ANDREW: (*silent*) I went to my room then . . .

JULIE: (*interrupts him, worried*) Completely ignore Kim's messages! . . .

ANDREW: . . . I went by my room and . . .

JULIE: . . . I only called you once, stopped by the room twice . . .

ANDREW: . . . I called you a couple of times . . .

JULIE: . . . I didn't want to be annoying . . .

ANDREW: Then I went to Boomsday.

Baer William Bradford
English 365: Take Home Exercises #2—The Overheard Conversation
Tuesday, September 08, 1998

Labor Day Weekend

JULIE: *late teens, touches hair frequently, blatantly flirting with Andrew, preppy sandals, tired, holding a cup of water*

ANDREW: *just turned 21, slightly intoxicated, preppy cap and sandals, is chewing gum, holding a bottle of water (Naya or something), blatantly not realizing Julie is flirting with him*

SCENE: *dorm lobby, door to lobby upstage right, front desk stage left facing stage right, Julie and Andrew are sitting on a two person couch up center stage, her looking towards him, him laid back in stage left corner of couch, pizza men walking occasionally from door to desk, other students sitting on other chairs and such studying*

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JULIE: *(constantly interjects comments)* Oh, yeah.

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JULIE: As usual.

ANDREW: . . . I saw my roommate with a couple of his friends and we hung out . . . *(trails off)*

JULIE: What about the next day?

ANDREW: I went home.

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ANDREW: About an hour 'n a half.

JULIE: What . . . man that must be nice, it's like half a day away for me, my friend's like, "I went home this afternoon." Pisses me off.

ANDREW: Um, yeah and then I saw Jane and did laundry.

JULIE: How was that, how'd it go?

ANDREW: *(thinks)* Oh yeah, we had a good time. By the way why didn't you call me?

JULIE: I only had like three minutes on my phone card.

ANDREW: Okay, so Sunday morning I went to church.

JULIE: With her?

ANDREW: She goes to the same church.

JULIE: What church?

ANDREW: Nondenominational.

JULIE: (*unusual enthusiastic*) Oh yeah, me too, I, isn't that cool, I mean that's great, don't you think . . .?!

ANDREW: yeah – and I did some other stuff and we watched *Titanic*.

JULIE: (*continues enthusiasm*) Oh, that movie is so good, I – had you seen it before?!

ANDREW: Once – I worked on the lawn then came home (*mumbles something about Becky*)

JULIE: (*calms down, concerned*) I saw Becky just an hour ago coming back from the Strip, she was so gone, her friends were taking her home. Her family, I don't know, her family is psycho.

ANDREW: Psycho? Her family, your mean her parents . . .

JULIE: Well, her family is – well not like her family, more like her step family, you know?

ANDREW: (*silent*) I went to my room then . . .

JULIE: (*interrupts him, worried*) Completely ignore Kim's messages! . . .

ANDREW: . . . I went by my room and . . .

JULIE: . . . I only called you once, stopped by the room twice . . .

ANDREW: . . . I called you a couple of times . . .

JULIE: . . . I didn't want to be annoying . . .

ANDREW: Then I went to Boomsday.

Sociology

MELISSA: *plaid night pants, x-large T-shirt, tired and thus absent minded, early twenties*

ANN: *similarly frumpy clothes, short attention span, 17*

SCENE: *Library. Four rows of books evenly spaced on stage. Far row stage right a librarian is sorting books. Melissa and Ann are in center stage aisle. Midnight, clock on wall center upstage.*

MELISSA: I hate verbs.

ANN: Do what?

MELISSA: I can't ever stay in the correct tense when I am writing. I am just not a writer I tell you.

ANN: mmhmm. *(searches through books)*

MELISSA: This paper I am working on, it is draining. I'm a sociologist not a writer.

ANN: *(pulls out a book)* Yeah.

MELISSA: You know what sociologists do, don't you?

ANN: Do I care? *(puts the book back)*

MELISSA: You should care. *(yawns)* I really don't want to write this paper. I just know my verbs will be all tense.

ANN: You mean in several tenses?

MELISSA: Yeah, that. I am not a writer like you.

ANN: I got that Melissa, I got that.

MELISSA: Umm, you okay?

ANN: Sure I am.

MELISSA: Sure you're sure?

ANN: *(looks at her exasperated)* What did I just say?

MELISSA: Huh?

ANN: I said I am sure.

MELISSA: Sure of what?

ANN: That I am fine! Never mind okay.

MELISSA: I really don't want to write this paper. Sociologist should be writing papers on the relationships between people in society. Don't you think?

ANN: mmhmm.

MELISSA: About how people relate to one another in society.

ANN: Yeah.

MELISSA: Thus helping break the bonds of miscommunication . . .

ANN: Sure. Whatever. Okay. *(walks to next aisle)*

MELISSA: *(follows her)* I don't suppose you could help me write this paper could you Ann?

ANN: How much you paying.

MELISSA: Depends. *(yawns)*

ANN: Looks like I should be the one setting the price since you are so tired, eh?

MELISSA: Yea . . . *(yawning)* . . . h.

ANN: After all I would be helping you break the bonds of miscommunication right?

MELISSA: Exactly.

ANN: So what about half again what you paid last time?

MELISSA: Double?

ANN: Exactly.

Sociology

MELISSA: *plaid night pants, x-large T-shirt, tired and thus absent minded, early twenties*

ANN: *similarly frumpy clothes, short attention span, 17*

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ANN: Exactly.

Hung Jury

JUDGE FRANKLIN STEWART: 35, *normal judge attire*

MICHAEL CAIN: 23, *Austin 3:16 shirt, jeans and work boots*

PEGGY HEART: 21, *Marlboro T-shirt, jeans*

JONATHAN HEART: 26, *Peggy's brother, redneck in a business suit, big bruise on left cheek*

MALE IN AUDIENCE: *Early 30s*

FEMALE IN AUDIENCE: *Early 40s*

SCENE: *Court room. Judge's bench upstage center. Stand left of bench. Jury box stage left. Court room seats stage right.*

JUDGE: (*sits down in Judge's bench*) Be seated.

MICHAEL: You can't tell ME what to do.

PEGGY: You see what I live with.

JUDGE: Order! . . . Please take your seats. (*everyone sits*) Miss Heart please present your case.

PEGGY: (*walks to the stand*) Well Michael here broke up with me and stole my car when he left. He took the keys and just drove off with it. Up and gone before I even knew what was happening.

MICHAEL: Shut your mouth bitch!

JUDGE: Order!

PEGGY: Anyways I sent Jonathan, my brother (*Jonathan nods at the judge*) to go get my car back. I don't know what happened next, but when Jon came back he had a big bruise on his cheek, but he didn't get the car.

JUDGE: Let's hear from you Mr. Heart. (*Peggy returns to seats, Jonathan approaches the stand*)

MICHAEL: Dammit, when do I get to speak!

JUDGE: Order! Order! You already got to present your case Mr. Cain. Mr. Heart please address the court.

JON: Well I went to his, I mean Michael's mom's house, and knocked on the door. Michael comes running out and hits me smack dab in the face.

Hung Jury

MICHAEL: He deserved it.

JUDGE: Please Mr. Cain don't make me hold you in contempt of court.

JON: So anyways that asshole gave me this big bruise and wouldn't give up the car.

JUDGE: Is this true Mr. Cain?

MICHAEL: They deserved it. She's a slut.

JUDGE: Miss Heart's sexual conduct is not on trial. Are Miss. and Mr. Heart's accusations true?

MICHAEL: Yes. *(quietly)* Fuck you.

JUDGE: Jury please give us your decision on this case. *(looks towards jury box)* Jury? *(obviously very upset)* Oh not again, I forgot to get a jury. Ugh. Where am I am I going to get a jury.

JON: How about some of them? *(points to audience)*

JUDGE: Wonderful idea. Could I have a few volunteers please?

MALE: *(to self)* Awesome. *(to judge)* Yes sir, right here sir. *(hopefully several audience members will volunteer and the judge will pick a few of them as well)*

FEMALE: Me too, me too. *(judge points to her, and Jonathan leads all the appointed members of the jury to the jury box, Male and Female lead a relatively loud but short adlib discussion on the case at hand and then quiet down)*

MALE: We have come to a decision.

JUDGE: Please elaborate.

MALE: We find Michael guilty of . . . well . . . he did some awful stuff to the Hearts.

MICHAEL: NO! I am not going to jail again. *(jumps out of seats towards jury box)*

JUDGE: Order! Order!

PEGGY: Again? You told me you had never been to jail before.

MICHAEL: Shut up bitch. *(pulls out a handgun and fires in direction of Peggy, Jon dodges in way of bullet and falls into jury box)*

CURTAIN

Hung Jury

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CURTAIN

INT. CRYPT - NIGHT

Baer William Bradford
English 365: Take Home Exercises #5-Beginning Screenwriting
Tuesday, September 29, 1998

INT. CRYPT - NIGHT

(1800s)

VLAD, a stereotypical vampire, wearing a black cape creeps through the door and stalks into the crypt. A light appears, flashing at first then wavering. We make out a torch on the wall.

Vlad looks towards the torch. He sees RICHARD, 40 years old, a stereotypical upper aristocracy gentleman with a penance for killing vampires. Richard waves a cross at Vlad.

VLAD AND RICHARD

RICHARD

I've got you now evil fiend.

VLAD

Do you really think that cross will effect me fool?

INT. CRYPT - NIGHT

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

('70s)

BARRY, early 20s, typical porn star, swaggers through the door naked, dick hanging low. A black light slowly flickers on and the shag carpet and various '70s decorative items are revealed.

RHONDA, mid 20s, blonde, typical porn star, lies on a black vinyl couch. She is dressed in merely a short skirt and bra. As she takes her hand away from the light switch she notices Barry walk in.

BARRY AND RHONDA

RHONDA

wha'cha got there for me big boy?

BARRY

wha'cha need?

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BARRY AND RHONDA

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Wha'cha need?

"VLADS REVENGE"

Baer William Bradford
English 365: Take-Home Exercises #6-Special Slugs
Wednesday, October 07, 1998

"VLADS REVENGE"

FADE IN:

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(1800s)

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RICHARD AND VLAD

RICHARD

I've got you now evil fiend.

VLAD

Do you really think that cross will affect me fool?

RICARD'S POV

RICHARD (O.S.)

It worked before.

VLAD

I just let you believe that it did. And besides I have brought a few of my friends this time.

WIDER VIEW

Several other vampires, these quite hideous, have entered the room.

RICHARD (O.S.)

"VLADS REVENGE"

I'm ready for anything.

BACK TO SCENE

The other vampires are agitated and Vlad struggles to keep them from attacking Richard. Despite his attempts they slowly push him forward.

VLAD SPFX

Vlad's appearance changes to a form more like the grotesque vampires and his fangs descend.

VLAD

We'll see about that. Attack!

RICHARD'S POV

Richard dives to one side of the crypt pulling out his silver sword as he does so. Melee ensues as Vlad let's a few of his servants advance. Richard dispatches them quickly and works his way towards Vlad.

BACK TO SCENE

RICHARD

What makes you think I won't defeat you once again?

VLAD

What makes you so unsure of yourself that you must ask me that? Surely you have all the angles covered?

RICHARD

As I am sure you do.

VLAD

May the best vampire win.

RICHARD

Ha. Certainly you mean man?

VLAD

No, I mean vampire.

“VLADS REVENGE”

Vlad lunges forward and over several vampires. He takes a juicy bite out of Richard's shoulder.

RICHARD

No!!!

RICHARD'S FACE SPFX

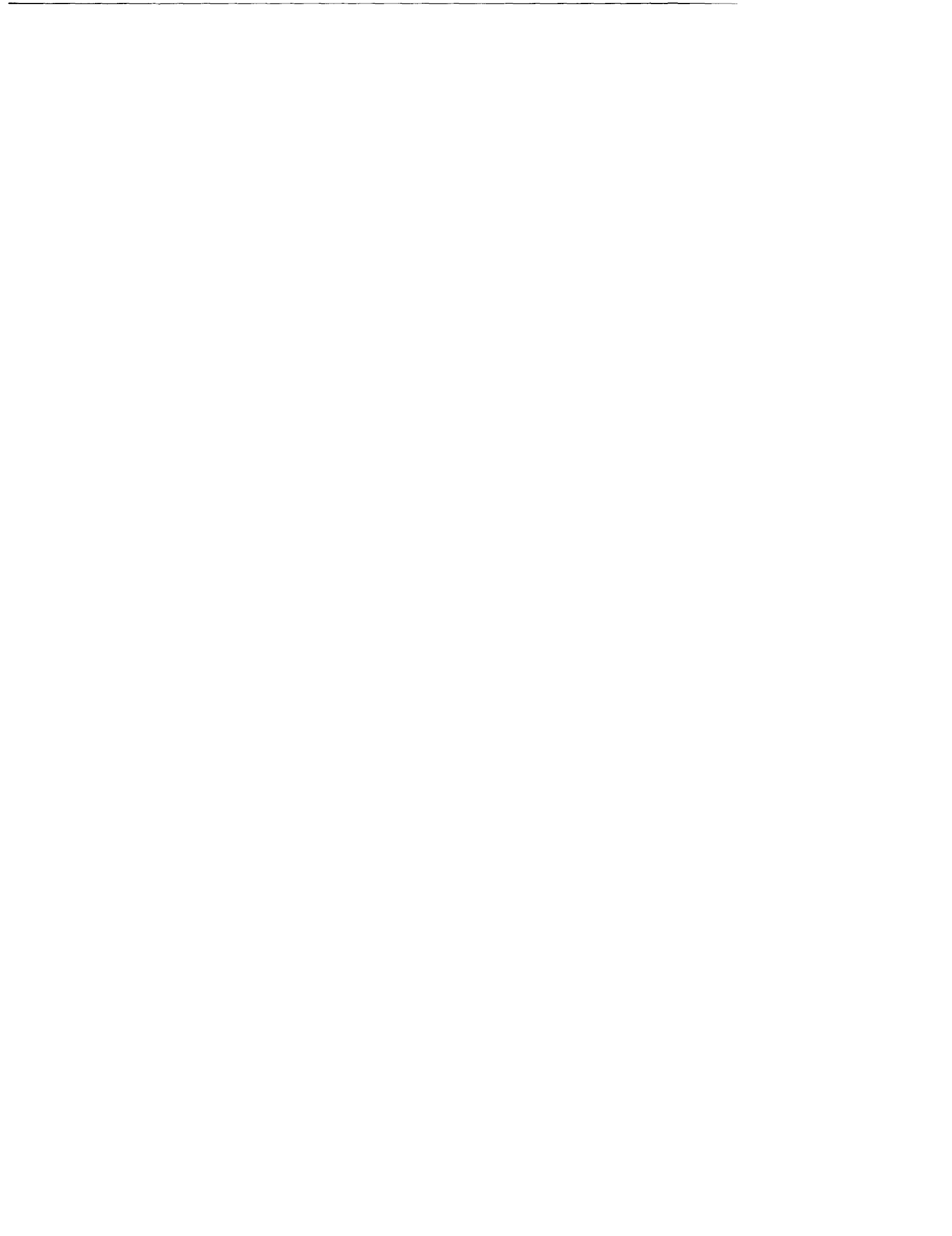
Richard's face turns stark white and a cocoon forms around him.

VLAD

then tosses him over his shoulder and leads his minions out of the crypt.

VLAD

May the best vampire win.



Baer William Bradford
English 365: Take-Home Exercises #6-Special Slugs
Wednesday, October 07, 1998

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VLAD

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"CAROM"

Baer William Bradford
English 365: Take-Home Exercises #7: The Micro Movie
Monday, October 19, 1998

"CAROM"

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

(PAST)

We see several derelict and ruined planets as we move closer to a sun and see a

PLANET SPFX

covered in buildings that look like massive mainframe computers.

One of the largest buildings on the planet explodes and sends a bright living energy blast into deep space. Immediately following this the planet begins to fall apart, but we follow the beam into the

STARS

where it disappears into deep space.

MATCH CUT:

STARS

with very different constellations.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

(PRESENT)

Our view lowers and we see first the moon over buildings and then seated on a bench CARY, late 20s, blonde, eating Chinese food with his DATE, mid 20s.

Cary is boring his date to death with the details of his sad life MOS. As he carries on

"CAROM"

CARY SPFX

is hit by a beam of light that suddenly comes around from the other side of the moon. His date disintegrates and he convulses, his hands forming into humanoid lobster claws and his skin forming an elastic basketball type appearance.

CARY
Aughhhhh!!!

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Cary drags himself out of bed and trips.

CARY
Ack!

CARY SPFX

bounces off the floor and hits the ceiling. A humorous sequence follows in which Cary tries to gain control of his newly gained powers but in the process destroys nearly all his possessions.

CUT TO:

INT. MALL - AFTERNOON

Cary and his friend ROBERT, early 20s dressed in a T-shirt adorned with the Green Lantern logo, walk by a fountain. Cary watches his step carefully.

CARY
I just couldn't control
myself, barely can now.

ROBERT
I told you not to drink so
much.

CARY
No man, I am serious. Here,
watch.

"CAROM"

Cary sets out to do a little bounce and ends up hitting the ceiling. After a couple of seconds he finally regains control.

CARY

See man.

ROBERT

Dude! You are a superhero! I can't believe it. You need a costume.

CARY

(not sarcastically)

You think?

SERIES OF SHOTS

Cary's life as a superhero starts slowly then takes off.

- A) Cary, in an awful looking costume, fights a super villain downtown. He gets his ass kicked.
- B) Cary fights another super villain downtown. His costume looks much better, but he still gets his ass kicked.
- C) Cary, same costume, beats a super villain and hands him over to the cops.
- D) The mayor gives Cary a key to the city, which a super villain promptly steals. Cary bounds off after the super villain. He gets his ass kicked.
- E) Cary, late 40s, beats yet another villain.
- F) Cary, late 50s, beats yet another villain, but looking worse for the wear collapses in the street, noticeably not bouncing.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - MORNING

Many futuristic superheroes, amongst them a YOUNG SUPERHERO, early 20s, and a MIDDLE AGED SUPERHERO, early 40s, and an old yet still geeky looking Robert surround the fresh dirt where Cary has just been buried.

YOUNG SUPERHERO

"CAROM"

I remember reading about him
as a child. I feel so honored
standing here.

MIDDLE AGED SUPERHERO
So honored.

YOUNG SUPERHERO
There will never be another
like him. He was the alpha.

MIDDLE AGED SUPERHERO
The alpha.

ROBERT
(to middle aged superhero)
Stop repeating him. Ack! You
all are so pathetic, none of
you could ever be like Cary.

MIDDLE AGED SUPERHERO
Like Cary.

GRAVESTONE

Cary's marker reads "Carom: The First of Many."

FADE OUT.

THE END

Baer William Bradford
English 365: Take-Home Exercises #7: The Micro Movie
Monday, October 19, 1998

"CAROM"

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CUT TO:

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The alpha.

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(to middle aged superhero)
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MIDDLE AGED SUPERHERO

Like Cary.

GRAVESTONE

Cary's marker reads "Carom: The First of Many."

FADE OUT.

THE END

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

Baer William Bradford
English 365: Final Project
Sunday, November 15, 1998

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

(PRESENT)

On a large oak bed we see ANN, 17 but looks younger, overweight, wearing the face of someone who is dying inside. Hair tousled and dressed in a frumpy nightgown she tosses too and fro in troubled sleep. She wakes with a start and sits straight up in bed.

Ann slowly raises herself out of her bed and maneuvers through an obstacle course of clothes. She finally reaches the shelf where all her mementos are placed. This shelf is the most organized spot in the room.

After looking over a few things she takes a metal model car off the shelf and goes back to her bed. Looking at the car she starts to get teary eyed.

ANN'S POV

She stares at the car through tears. We see that a front license plate and a couple of other accessories are missing.

MATCH CUT:

Car is missing even more parts.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

(7 YEARS AGO)

The other parts are lying on the table amongst modeling glue and other such supplies.

Ann, seven years younger and dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, reaches for a piece of the model and JAMES, late teens, quite a tall and built guy, places his hand over hers calmly.

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

JAMES AND ANN

JAMES

I think we put this piece on next, not
that one.

ANN

Okay big brother.

Ann puts a few more pieces in place. Her FATHER, slightly graying hair, dressed for working around the house, walks past them and fixes himself a glass of ice water.

FATHER

Hmmph, why don't you all do something
productive. I've got a oil filter that
needs changing on that VW Rabbit I picked
up at salvage.

ANN

Dad, James is being nice for once.

JAMES

(calmly)

Be quiet Ann.

INT. DEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Ann is sitting watching TV drinking a soda. James walks in the room and pushes her out of her chair violently.

JAMES

Get the hell out of my seat.

ANN

Do what? What are you doing? Please
don't . . .

JAMES

Shutup!

Ann tries her best to get out of his way but he pushes her to the ground and kicks her in the side. Ann barely protests at first, looks like she is used to this kind of behavior, we see a few bruises on her when her shirt flies up during the following

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JAMES AND ANN

JAMES

Dad is right, you're useless!

ANN

(sobbing)

But, but James, you were acting so nice.
What did I do to you.

James walks out of the room as if he didn't even hear her. We then hear football on the TV in the other room.

ANN'S POV

She looks at the car now missing a few pieces such as the front license plate.

MOM (O.S.)

Be quite in there, I've got work tonight
and I'm trying to sleep!

MATCHCUT:

Ann, through less tears is still staring at the car. Ann starts suddenly as she hears a knock at her door.

ANN

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

Come in.

Ann sees her MOM, late forties very motherly looking in an Aunt Bea sort of way, walk in the room.

MOM AND ANN

MOM

What's wrong peanut?

ANN

I don't feel good mommy.

Mom sits down on the side of the bed and gives Ann a hug.

MOM

Things aren't that bad. You need to cheer up. Have you taken your medicine?

ANN

Yes, mom, you know it doesn't help.

Ann turns away from her and rolls into a ball of covers and sighs.

MOM

You'll be okay.

Mom looks teary eyed because she knows she can't help and walks out of the room softly closing the door behind her.

When Ann hears her mom leave she rolls back over looking towards her shelf.

ANN'S POV

Ann focuses in on a postcard of a baby pony.

MATCHCUT:

A horse is rearing up on a TV show that young Ann is watching.

INT. LIVING ROOM - 2 A.M.

(5 YEARS AGO)

We see Ann, wearing a nice T-shirt and sweat pants, in a very small living room, not her own. Her new "friend" AMY, same age as Ann,

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

trying to dress like a prep but not succeeding in hiding her white trash attitude, walks in the room. Their discussion is obviously strained.

AMY AND ANN

AMY

Would you like a vodka?

ANN

Do what? We're only 12, I'll just have a soda, k? . . .

AMY

It was nice of you to come over. I never really paid much attention to you before. You know, big school and all.

ANN

Well, thanks for the invitation Amy. I don't really have many friends . .

Her friend blatantly ignores her as the phone starts ringing o.s. She just walks right out of the room.

ANN

What an attitude!

ANN'S POV

Ann looks at the clock on the wall, it's one of those stupid swinging cat tail clocks.

We hear someone fumbling at the locks to the front door then her friend's BROTHER swaggers drunkenly in the door. He takes one look at ANN and

BROTHER AND ANN

BROTHER

Who are you?!

ANN

I'm Ann. I met your sister at . . .

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

BROTHER

My sister, damnit, she's a bitch! Why don't you just get the hell out of here before I kick her and your ass!

ANN

She invited me over and . . .

BROTHER

Get the hell out or I'll kill you!!!

He isn't going to take no for an answer, walks up to her and kicks her violently in the leg. Ann gasps and steps up trying to walk slowly around him out the door.

ANN

(under breath)

Asshole.

He hears her and turns around violently but slips and falls as Ann slams the door and runs out into the dark.

EXT. GRAVEYARD

Ann has walked the wrong way while trying to get home. She is sitting and leaning against the back of a statue of Jesus. Her breath comes out in wisps as she shivers in the cold.

From behind the statue we see the hand of someone her age reaching for her neck. The ASSALIENT pulls her against the statue and

ASSALIENT AND ANN

ASSALIENT

Be quiet or I'll rip your head off.

Ann screams as the assailant, holding her neck tightly, walks around and faces her. He is a mere 13 year old kid, but just big enough to push Ann around. Ann is surprised, it's a kid she knows from school named Tom.

ANN

(gasping)

Tom, what the hell are you . . .

TOM

Shut up.

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

Tom shoves her to her knees and despite her struggles starts to put his hands up her shirt from behind.

MONTAGE

In a very surreal, yet obviously not a dream, sequence, Tom rapes young Ann. The whole entire time he is at her back, and this is presented as a very demoralizing experience. A few times there is a shot of the statue looking down at her.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NEXT MORNING

Ann is now in her own house and is going through a rigorous cleaning of herself. The bathroom is strewn with her clothes, several perfumes and lots of different soaps.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A) Ann taking a shower her skin red from rubbing.
- B) Ann applying perfumes, one after another.
- C) Ann washing her hands and body with a wash rag.
- D) Ann throwing her clothes in the trash can outside.
- E) Ann washing her hands again.
- F) Ann lying in her bed crying and scratching at her skin.

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Ann and her mother are getting out of the car and walking to a gift shop in the Smoky Mountains. Ann has rings under her eyes and walks like someone who hasn't had any sleep. As they approach the gift shop several old men are discussing the "good ole days" sitting on a bench outside and kids are running around chasing butterflies and each other.

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

MOM AND ANN

MOM

Sorry your evening with Amy didn't go well last night.

ANN

I'm used to it, life sucks and I will never have any close friends.

MOM

I love you.

ANN

(sighs) I love you too.

They walk into the gift shop which is arrayed with postcards, Smoky Mountain brown bear figurines and other such fare. Her mom picks out a post card and hands it to Ann.

MATCH CUT:

Ann is still looking at the postcard on her shelf, but now through teary eyes.

She is startled by the telephone ringing.

ANN'S BEDROOM/HEATHERS BEDROOM INTERCUTTING

ANN

Hello?

HEATEHR

Hey Ann. How are you feeling?

ANN

Pretty shitty. You?

HEATHER

I talked to some great guys online last night.

ANN

Must be nice. All guys hate me.

HEATHER

No they don't you've just had bad luck with guys in the past.

ANN

You have room to talk. Seems like guys

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

just want to use both of us.

HEATHER

Yeah but we both love 'em!

ANN

I think I've given up.

HEATHER

Don't, you can always look for men online.

ANN

(sigh) It's always given me the same results as in real life. But maybe I'll give it another try.

HEATHER

Be careful, BUT have fun!

Ann gets out of bed revitalized by her conversation with her best friend. She walks downstairs to her computer and logs in. While it is connecting she goes to her stereo system and puts on Jewel.

She logs into Yahoo! Personals

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- A) She reads a few ads. Laughing at some interested in others. Even responding to a few.
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NIGHT

She sits down at the computer disparagingly, not expecting much. She opens up her browser and logs into Yahoo! Personals once again, this time she goes back to looking through the men seeking ads again. After laughing at a few more and being shocked by a couple advertising for

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

sexual favors she runs across:

ANN'S POV

ANN (O.S.)

"Nice guy seeks fun/romantic
relationship."

WILLIAM (V.O.)

Hi there. Okay I will cut to the chase,
girls don't want nice guys, they don't
want honest guys who are open. So it
looks like I stand no chance in a
relationship . . . wanna prove me wrong?
My only limitation is I haven't got a
car. I love to kiss, cuddle, dance, maybe
more if the mood is right, but I am
waiting. I love computers, reading,
movies, ect . . . can be VERY fun to be
around, if the person I am with is fun
too would ad this

(PS Only looking for a local relatinship)

ANN

ANN

Well, his spelling could be better but . .
.

Ann writes a letter in response.

ANN (V.O.)

I bet I can prove you wrong. I've always
wanted a nice guy. I live in Bristol.
Write back if interested.

Ann clicks "Submit Entry."

INT. BEDROOM - 3 A.M.

Ann is lying on her bed talking on the phone. Still dressed in her day
clothes she looks tired but content. She is playing with her cat and
sorting her CD folder.

ANN

When I wrote that I lived in Bristol I

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

didn't think you would email me back.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Well, I have tried long distance relationships before and well, it just never works.

ANN

I promise if you give me a chance I won't hurt you.

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Sure . . . I've heard that before.

ANN

No, really. Whatever, if you don't believe me I am not going to try to convince you. But we've talked for hours now and we really click, you know we do. And I love you already.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

I could defiantly love you, I . . .

ANN

You don't have to say it.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

I just don't think this will work out.

ANN

Well it's your loss, but if you think you want to give me a try I will be here.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

O . . . okay . . . maybe I will talk to you later.

ANN

Later.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Bye, I love you. (click)

Ann pushes her CD folder on the floor and rolls up in her covers holding her cat.

ANN

He'll call back Powder.

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

MONTAGE

We see her green digital clock ticking off the hours and Ann rolling sleeplessly in her bed. Silhouettes of a man putting his arms around her at the movie theatre fading into pictures of a her and a man looking up into the stars together and this fades into darkness.

ANN'S POV

Her eye's open suddenly and startled by the phone she sits straight up. As she reaches for it she looks at the clock and sees that it says 9 A.M.

Ann sees her cat come running in the room and jump on her lap.

ANN

Hello?

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Hey, umm, Ann, I didn't call too early did I?

ANN

No.

WILLIAM

I was afraid I would wake your parents, or they would answer or . . . umm, Ann, are you still interested in maybe meeting.

ANN

Yes.

WILLIAM

Cool.

Ann has been looking at her shelf, she looks up at the ceiling and the patterns form into two people in a loving embrace.

ANN

Did I tell you that your pictures of you on your website are just gorgeous.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

Umm, yes.

ANN
I can't wait to hold you.

WILLIAM (O.S.)
Me too.

ANN
I think we'll fit perfectly.

WILLIAM (O.S.)
Huh?

ANN
(giggles) Nevermind.

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Here is the story of a young woman living a life out of balance. Saddened by past experiences she is in a depression. All it takes to awaken a little hope is a good friend and an equally disillusioned young man. Watch how she makes her life work for her via the internet in "Ann's Struggle."

Baer William Bradford
English 365: Final Project
Sunday, November 15, 1998

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

FADE IN:

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(PRESENT)

On a large oak bed we see ANN, 17 but looks younger, overweight, wearing the face of someone who is dying inside. Hair tousled and dressed in a frumpy nightgown she tosses too and fro in troubled sleep. She wakes with a start and sits straight up in bed.

Ann slowly raises herself out of her bed and maneuvers through an obstacle course of clothes. She finally reaches the shelf where all her mementos are placed. This shelf is the most organized spot in the room.

After looking over a few things she takes a metal model car off the shelf and goes back to her bed. Looking at the car she starts to get teary eyed.

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She stares at the car through tears. We see that a front license plate and a couple of other accessories are missing.

MATCH CUT:

Car is missing even more parts.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

(7 YEARS AGO)

The other parts are lying on the table amongst modeling glue and other such supplies.

Ann, seven years younger and dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, reaches for a piece of the model and JAMES, late teens, quite a tall and built guy, places his hand over hers calmly.

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(5 YEARS AGO)

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He takes one look at ANN and

BROTHER AND ANN

BROTHER

Who are you?!

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I'm Ann. I met your sister at
. . . .

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My sister, damnit, she's a
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"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

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"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

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(calmly)

Be quiet Ann.

FATHER

You never do any work anyway Ann.

JAMES

(whispering)

I told you so.

FATHER

Stay out of this James.

JAMES

(whispering)

You just don't know when to quit.

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- C) Ann puts her hands up to avoid attack.
- D) James continues to punch, connecting a few times both with the wall and her head. The sheet rock is dented by his blows and at one spot it gives in.
- E) James then tosses Ann across the room.
- F) He sees the model car on the couch grabs it and tosses it at her, barely missing her head.

JAMES AND ANN

JAMES

Dad is right, you're useless!

ANN

(sobbing)

James, don't you care about me?

James walks out of the room as if he didn't even hear her. We then hear football on the TV in the other room.

ANN'S POV

She looks at the car now missing a few pieces such as the front license plate.

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

MOM (O.S.)

Be quite in there, I've got work tonight
and I'm trying to sleep!

MATCHCUT:

Ann, through less tears is still staring at the car. Ann starts suddenly as she hears a knock at her door.

ANN

Come in.

Ann sees her MOM, late forties, very motherly looking in an Aunt Bea sort of way, walk in the room.

MOM AND ANN

MOM

What's wrong peanut?

ANN

I don't feel good mommy.

Mom sits down on the side of the bed and gives Ann a hug.

MOM

Things aren't that bad. You need to cheer up. Have you taken you're medicine?

ANN

Yes, mom, you know it doesn't help.

MOM

It may not make all your problems go magically away, but your antidepressants will help.

Ann turns away from her and rolls into a ball of covers and sighs.

MOM

You'll be okay.

Mom looks teary eyed because she knows she can't help and walks out of the room softly closing the door behind her.

When Ann hears her mom leave she rolls back over looking towards her shelf.

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

ANN'S POV

Ann focuses in on a postcard of a baby pony.

MATCHCUT:

A horse is raring up on a TV show that young Ann is watching.

INT. LIVING ROOM - 2 A.M.

(5 YEARS AGO)

We see Ann, wearing a nice T-shirt and sweat pants, in a very small living room, not her own. Her new "friend" AMY, same age as Ann, trying to dress like a prep but not succeeding in hiding her white trash attitude, walks in the room. Their discussion is obviously strained.

AMY AND ANN

AMY

Would you like a vodka?

ANN

Do what? We're only 12, I'll just have a soda, k? . . .

AMY

(interrupting)

It was nice of you to come over. I never really paid much attention to you before. You know, big school and all.

ANN

Well, thanks for the invitation Amy. I don't really have many friends . .

Her friend blatantly ignores her as the phone starts ringing o.s. She just walks right out of the room.

ANN

What an attitude! Yet more proof that there's not one nice person at school.

ANN'S POV

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

Ann looks at the clock on the wall, it's one of those stupid swinging cat tail clocks.

We hear someone fumbling at the locks to the front door and a holler of frustration. There's a kick at the door that shakes it on its hinges. Finally the door is slammed open and her friend's BROTHER swaggers drunkenly in the door. He takes one look at ANN and

BROTHER AND ANN

BROTHER

Who are you?!

ANN

I'm Ann. I met your sister at . . .

BROTHER

My sister, damnit, she's a bitch! Why don't you just get the hell out of here before I kick her and your ass!

ANN

She invited me over and . . .

BROTHER

Get the hell out or I'll kill you!!!

He isn't going to take no for an answer, walks up to her and kicks her violently in the leg. Ann gasps and steps up trying to walk slowly around him out the door.

ANN

(under breath)

Drunk.

He hears her and turns around violently but slips and falls as Ann slams the door and runs out into the dark.

EXT. GRAVEYARD

Ann has walked the wrong way while trying to get home. She is sitting and leaning against the back of a statue of Jesus. Her breath comes out in wisps as she shivers in the cold.

From behind the statue we see the hand of someone her age reaching for

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

her neck. The ASSAILANT pulls her against the statue and

ASSAILANT AND ANN

ASSAILANT

Be quiet or I'll rip your head off.

Ann screams as the assailant, holding her neck tightly, walks around and faces her. He is a mere 13 year old kid, but just big enough to push Ann around. Ann is surprised, it's a kid she knows from school named Tom.

ANN

(gasping)

Tom, what the hell are you . . .

TOM

Shut up.

Tom shoves her to her knees and despite her struggles starts to put his hands up her shirt from behind.

MONTAGE

In a very surreal, yet obviously not a dream, sequence, Tom rapes young Ann. The whole entire time he is at her back, and this is presented as a very demoralizing experience. A few times there is a shot of the statue looking down at her.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NEXT MORNING

Ann is now in her own house and is going through a rigorous cleaning of herself. The bathroom is strewn with her clothes, several perfumes and lots of different soaps.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A) Ann taking a shower her skin red from rubbing.
- B) Ann applying perfumes, one after another.
- C) Ann washing her hands and body with a wash rag.

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

- D) Ann throwing her clothes in the trash can outside.
- E) Ann washing her hands again.
- F) Ann lying in her bed crying and scratching at her skin.

EXT. SMOKY MOUNTAINS/RESTSTOP - THAT AFTERNOON

Ann and her mother are getting out of the car into a light drizzle. After stretching their legs they start walking towards a gift shop. Ann has rings under her eyes and walks like someone who hasn't had any sleep. Outside the gift shop several old men are discussing the "good ole days" sitting on a bench and kids are running around chasing butterflies and each other.

MOM AND ANN

MOM

Sorry your evening with Amy didn't go well last night.

ANN

I'm used to it, life sucks and I will never have any close friends.

MOM

Are you sure that is all that is wrong.

ANN

There's nothing really.

MOM

Then why were you crying in the car earlier.

ANN

I am just really sad, okay?

MOM

Well, I'm here for you if there is anything you need to talk about.

ANN

I love you.

They walk into the gift shop which is arrayed with postcards, Smoky

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

Mountain brown bear figurines and other such fare. Her mom picks out a post card and hands it to Ann.

MATCH CUT:

Ann is still looking at the postcard on her shelf, but now through teary eyes.

She is startled by the telephone ringing.

It's her best friend HEATHER, a couple years older than Ann, short red hair, and dressed in a McDonald's uniform. Her room is well organized, no posters on her wall, we can tell she doesn't spend much time there.

ANN'S BEDROOM/HEATHER'S BEDROOM INTERCUTTING

ANN

Hello?

HEATHER

Hey Ann. How are you feeling?

ANN

Pretty shitty. You?

HEATHER

I talked to some great guys online last night.

ANN

Must be nice. All guys hate me.

HEATHER

No they don't you've just had bad luck with guys in the past.

ANN

You have room to talk. Seems like guys just want to use both of us.

HEATHER

Yeah but we both love 'em!

ANN

I think I've given up.

HEATHER

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

Don't, you can always look for men online.

ANN

(sigh) It's always given me the same results as in real life. But maybe I'll give it another try.

HEATHER

Gotta go to work. Be careful, BUT have fun!

Ann gets out of bed revitalized by her conversation with her best friend. She walks downstairs to her computer and logs in. While it is connecting she goes to her stereo system and puts on Jewel.

She logs into Yahoo! Personals

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) While she looks at a few ads we hear the voices of various men v.o. reading their letters. She laughs at some, looks more interested in others. Even responds to a few.
- B) Reading responses they are all vulgar or the people had lied about themselves in their ads. We hear some of the same men v.o. reading their letters but now their voices fade from old to young, from young to old, sophisticated to redneck, courteous to vulgar, and in one extreme case male to female.
- C) She reads while typing in her own ad. "17 F from Bristol, TN seeking kind sensitive male . . ."
- D) She clicks "Submit entry".
- E) Yet again the responses are less than satisfactory and we hear another set of v.o. voices, in this case most show sexual desire.

NIGHT

She sits down at the computer disparagingly, not expecting much. She opens up her browser and logs into Yahoo! Personals once again, this time she goes back to looking through the men seeking ads again. After laughing at a few more and being shocked by a couple advertising for sexual favors she runs across:

ANN'S POV

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

ANN (O.S.)

"Nice guy seeks fun/romantic relationship."

WILLIAM (V.O.)

Hi there. Okay I will cut to the chase, girls don't want nice guys, they don't want honest guys who are open. So it looks like I stand no chance in a relationship . . . wanna prove me wrong? My only limitation is I haven't got a car. I love to kiss, cuddle, dance, maybe more if the mood is right, but I am waiting. I love computers, reading, movies, etc . . . can be VERY fun to be around, if the person I am with is fun too would ad this

(PS Only looking for a local relationship)

ANN

ANN

Well, his spelling could be better but . . .

Ann writes a letter in response.

ANN (V.O.)

I bet I can prove you wrong. I've always wanted a nice guy. I live in Bristol. Write back if interested.

Ann clicks "Submit Entry."

INT. BEDROOM - 3 A.M.

Ann is lying on her bed talking on the phone. Still dressed in her day clothes she looks tired but content. She is playing with her cat and sorting her CD folder.

ANN

When I wrote that I lived in Bristol I didn't think you would email me back.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Well, I have tried long distance relationships before and well, it just

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

never works.

ANN

I promise if you give me a chance I won't hurt you.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Sure . . . I've heard that before.

ANN

No, really. Whatever, if you don't believe me I am not going to try to convince you. But we've talked for hours now and we really click, you know we do. And I love you already.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

I could definitely love you, I . . .

ANN

You don't have to say it.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

I just don't think this will work out.

ANN

Well it's your loss, but if you think you want to give me a try I will be here.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

O . . . okay . . . maybe I will talk to you later.

ANN

Later.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Bye, I love you. (click)

Ann pushes her CD folder on the floor and rolls up in her covers holding her cat.

ANN

He'll call back Powder.

MONTAGE

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

We see her green digital clock ticking off the hours and Ann rolling sleeplessly in her bed. Silhouettes of a man putting his arms around her at the movie theatre fading into pictures of a her and a man looking up into the stars together and this fades into darkness.

ANN'S POV

Her eye's open suddenly and startled by the phone she sits straight up. As she reaches for it she looks at the clock and sees that it says 9 A.M.

Ann sees her cat come running in the room and jump on her lap.

ANN

Hello?

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Hey, umm, Ann, I didn't call too early did I?

ANN

No.

WILLIAM

I was afraid I would wake your parents, or they would answer or . . . umm, Ann, are you still interested in maybe meeting.

ANN

Yes.

WILLIAM

Cool.

Ann has been looking at her shelf, she looks up at the ceiling and the patterns form into two people in a loving embrace.

ANN

Did I tell you that your pictures of you on your website are just gorgeous.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Umm, yes.

ANN

I can't wait to hold you.

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Me too.

ANN

I think we'll fit perfectly.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Huh?

ANN

(giggles) Nevermind.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

We see Ann's two story split foyer house from

WILLIAM'S POV

there are several cars in the drive way in various conditions. Her father is working under the front side of a camper. From behind we hear

FRIEND (O.S.)

You gonna be okay?

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Sure man, see you tomorrow.

FRIEND (O.S.)

Okay, later.

We see the car William has arrived in drive off and he picks up his bookbag, some clothes spilling out the side. As he looks up we see Ann come walking out of the front door. She comes down the steps towards him, a little hesitant at first then quickening her pace.

ANN AND WILLIAM

William, 21, slightly tall, dressed in a very bright green and black swirl patterned button down shirt and shorts. He carries himself with false confidence.

ANN

I was worried you weren't really going to

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

come.

WILLIAM

Well, yeah, I was a little nervous too.
But I would never do something like that.
Just a sec k?

ANN

Huh?

William walks over to her father.

WILLIAM

Ahem.

Her father pulls himself from under the camper and looks blankly at William. William reaches out his hand gingerly and her father takes it. They give a quick firm shake. William looks at the grease on his hand and makes a point not to wipe it off.

WILLIAM

Nice to meet you.

FATHER

Yes.

William, just strong enough to not be taken aback by this cold greeting walks back to Ann.

ANN

What was that all about?

WILLIAM

Just wanted to be polite.

ANN

I can't believe he even acknowledged your existence.

WILLIAM

He barely did.

ANN

He has never talked to one of my boyfriends before at all.

WILLIAM

He seems nice enough though.

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

They start to walk around to the back of the house. William and Ann are very aware of their bodies as they take each others hands. They continue to get closer and closer together during their conversation.

WILLIAM

What did you want to do today?

ANN

Well my mom's making dinner of course and we can just spend time and get to know each other. You can stay pretty late before my mom takes you to your hotel.

WILLIAM

Too bad I can't stay here.

They sit down on the porch swing.

WILLIAM

I like your house. Split foyer's are cool. My Pa's a carpenter you know.

ANN

You're right, it's a split foyer!

William moves a lot closer to Ann. Ann looks at him and doesn't protest, in fact she hugs him close.

WILLIAM

You're so sweet.

They give a mutual kiss. Then look at each other. Obviously the first kiss wasn't enough because they immediately embrace in another longer kiss. William finally breaks it and looks around.

WILLIAM

Umm, is your mom around.

ANN

Don't worry about her, she could care less what we do.

WILLIAM

I just don't want to cause any problems.

ANN

Don't worry so much.

WILLIAM

"ANN'S STRUGGLE" 2

Okay.

They get back to kissing, but this only last a few seconds because her mom walks out the back door.

MOM

Hey, what do you all want to eat?

William is obviously flustered.

WILLIAM

Whatcha got?

ANN'S POV

Ann's mom and William continue to talk MOS, but Ann just looks longingly at William. Above his shoulder she sees two birds flying around squawking at each other, they look aggravated, as if they are fighting. But they settle onto a branch and sit next to each other, slowly jumping closer to one another.

WILLIAM AND ANN

WILLIAM

Ann?

ANN

Oh, what did you decide for dinner.

WILLIAM

Nothing really sounded good, but we're having chicken.

ANN

What do you mean nothing sounded good?

WILLIAM

Just not too hungry.

Baer William Bradford

"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

(PRESENT)

On a large oak bed we see ANN, 17 but looks younger, overweight, wearing the face of someone who is dying inside. Hair tousled and dressed in a frumpy nightgown she tosses to-and-fro in troubled sleep. She wakes with a start and sits straight up in bed.

Ann slowly raises herself out of her bed and maneuvers through an obstacle course of clothes. She finally reaches the shelf where all her mementos are placed. This shelf is the most organized spot in the room.

After looking over a few things she takes a metal model car off the shelf and goes back to her bed. Looking at the car she starts to get teary eyed.

ANN'S POV

She stares at the car through tears. We see that a front license plate and a couple of other accessories are missing.

MATCH CUT:

Car is missing even more parts.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

(7 YEARS AGO)

The other parts are lying on the table amongst modeling glue and other such supplies.

Ann, seven years younger and dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, reaches for a piece of the model and JAMES, late teens, quite a tall and built guy, places his hand over hers calmly.

JAMES AND ANN

JAMES

I think we put this piece on next, not that one.

ANN

Okay big brother.

Ann puts a few more pieces in place. Her FATHER, slightly graying hair, dressed for working around the house, walks past them and fixes himself a glass of ice water.

FATHER

Hmmph, why don't you do something productive. I've got a oil filter that needs changing on that VW Rabbit I picked up at salvage.

ANN

Dad, James is being nice for once.

JAMES

(calmly)

Be quiet Ann.

FATHER

You never do any work anyway Ann.

JAMES

(whispering)

I told you so.

FATHER

Stay out of this James.

JAMES
(whispering)
You just don't know when to
quit.

INT. DEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Ann is sitting watching TV drinking a soda. James walks in the room and pushes her out of her chair violently.

JAMES
Get the hell out of my seat.

ANN
Do what? What are you doing?
Please don't . . .

JAMES
Shut up!

Ann tries her best to get out of his way but he pushes her to the ground and kicks her in the side. Ann barely protests at first, looks like she is used to this kind of behavior, we see a few bruises on her when her shirt flies up during the following

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) James pushes Ann around the room.
- B) James backs her into a corner and starts punching at her head.
- C) Ann puts her hands up to avoid attack.
- D) James continues to punch, connecting a few times both with the wall and her head. The sheet rock is dented by his blows and at one spot it gives in.
- E) James then tosses Ann across the room.
- F) He sees the model car on the couch grabs it and tosses it at her, barely missing her head.

JAMES AND ANN

JAMES

Dad is right, you're useless!

ANN

(sobbing)

James, don't you care about
me?

James walks out of the room as if he didn't even hear her.
We then hear football on the TV in the other room.

ANN'S POV

She looks at the car now missing a few pieces such as the
front license plate.

MOM (O.S.)

Be quite in there, I've got
work tonight and I'm trying
to sleep!

MATCHCUT:

Ann, through less tears is still staring at the car. Ann
starts suddenly as she hears a knock at her door.

ANN

Come in.

Ann sees her MOM, late forties, very motherly looking in
an Aunt Bea sort of way, walk in the room.

MOM AND ANN

MOM

What's wrong peanut?

ANN

I don't feel good mommy.

Mom sits down on the side of the bed and gives Ann a hug.

MOM

Things aren't that bad. You need to cheer up. Have you taken your medicine?

ANN

Yes, mom, you know it doesn't help.

MOM

It may not make all your problems go magically away, but your antidepressants will help.

Ann turns away from her and rolls into a ball of covers and sighs.

MOM

You'll be okay.

Mom looks teary eyed because she knows she can't help and walks out of the room softly closing the door behind her.

When Ann hears her mom leave she rolls back over looking towards her shelf.

ANN'S POV

Ann focuses in on a postcard of a baby pony.

MATCHCUT:

A horse is rearing up on a TV show that young Ann is watching.

INT. LIVING ROOM - 2 A.M.

(5 YEARS AGO)

We see Ann, wearing a nice T-shirt and sweat pants, in a very small living room, not her own. Her new "friend" AMY, same age as Ann, trying to dress like a prep but not succeeding in hiding her white trash attitude, walks in the room. Their discussion is obviously strained.

AMY AND ANN

AMY

Would you like a vodka?

ANN

Do what? We're only 12, I'll
just have a soda, k? . . .

AMY

(interrupting)

It was nice of you to come
over. I never really paid
much attention to you before.
You know, big school and all.

ANN

Well, thanks for the
invitation Amy. I don't
really have many friends . .

Her friend blatantly ignores her as the phone starts
ringing o.s. She just walks right out of the room.

ANN

What an attitude! Yet more
proof that there's not one
nice person at school.

ANN'S POV

Ann looks at the clock on the wall, it's one of those
stupid swinging cat tail clocks.

We hear someone fumbling at the locks to the front door
and a holler of frustration. There's a kick at the door
that shakes it on its hinges. Finally the door is slammed
open and her friend's BROTHER swaggers drunkenly in the
door. He takes one look at ANN and

BROTHER AND ANN

BROTHER

Who are you?!

ANN

I'm Ann. I met your sister at
. . .

BROTHER

My sister, damnit, she's a
bitch! Why don't you just get
the hell out of here before I
kick her and your ass!

ANN

She invited me over and . . .

BROTHER

Get the hell out or I'll kill
you!!!

He isn't going to take no for an answer, walks up to her
and kicks her violently in the leg. Ann gasps and steps up
trying to walk slowly around him out the door.

ANN

(under breath)

Drunk.

He hears her and turns around violently but slips and
falls as Ann slams the door and runs out into the dark.

EXT. GRAVEYARD

Ann has walked the wrong way while trying to get home. She
is sitting and leaning against the back of a statue of
Jesus. Her breath comes out in wisps as she shivers in the
cold.

From behind the statue we see the hand of someone her age
reaching for her neck. The ASSAILANT pulls her against the
statue and

ASSAILANT AND ANN

ASSAILANT

Be quiet or I'll rip your
head off.

Ann screams as the assailant, holding her neck tightly, walks around and faces her. He is a mere 13 year old kid, but just big enough to push Ann around. Ann is surprised, it's a kid she knows from school named Tom.

ANN

(gasping)

Tom, what the hell are you .

. .

TOM

Shut up.

Tom shoves her to her knees and despite her struggles starts to put his hands up her shirt from behind.

MONTAGE

In a very surreal, yet obviously not a dream, sequence, Tom rapes young Ann. The whole entire time he is at her back, and this is presented as a very demoralizing experience. A few times there is a shot of the statue looking down at her.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NEXT MORNING

Ann is now in her own house and is going through a rigorous cleaning of herself. The bathroom is strewn with her clothes, several perfumes and lots of different soaps.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A) Ann taking a shower her skin red from rubbing.
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Ann and her mother are getting out of the car into a light drizzle. After stretching their legs they start walking towards a gift shop. Ann has rings under her eyes and walks like someone who hasn't had any sleep. Outside the gift shop several old men are discussing the "good ole days" sitting on a bench and kids are running around chasing butterflies and each other.

MOM AND ANN

MOM

Sorry your evening with Amy didn't go well last night.

ANN

I'm used to it, life sucks and I will never have any close friends.

MOM

Are you sure that is all that is wrong.

ANN

There's nothing really.

MOM

Then why were you crying in the car earlier.

ANN

I am just really sad, okay?

MOM

Well, I'm here for you if there is anything you need to talk about.

ANN

I love you.

They walk into the gift shop which is arrayed with postcards, Smoky Mountain brown bear figurines and other such fare. Her mom picks out a post card and hands it to Ann.

MATCH CUT:

Ann is still looking at the postcard on her shelf, but now through teary eyes.

She is startled by the telephone ringing.

It's her best friend HEATHER, a couple years older than Ann, short red hair, and dressed in a McDonald's uniform. Her room is well organized, no posters on her wall, we can tell she doesn't spend much time there.

ANN'S BEDROOM/HEATHER'S BEDROOM INTERCUTTING

ANN

Hello?

HEATHER

Hey Ann. How are you feeling?

ANN

Pretty shitty. You?

HEATHER

I talked to some great guys online last night.

ANN

Must be nice. All guys hate me.

HEATHER

No they don't you've just had bad luck with guys in the past.

ANN

You have room to talk. Seems like guys just want to use both of us.

HEATHER

Yeah but we both love 'em!

ANN

I think I've given up.

HEATHER

Don't, you can always look for men online.

ANN

(sigh) It's always given me the same results as in real life. But maybe I'll give it another try.

HEATHER

Gotta go to work. Be careful, BUT have fun!

Ann gets out of bed revitalized by her conversation with her best friend. She walks downstairs to her computer and logs in. While it is connecting she goes to her stereo system and puts on Jewel.

She logs into Yahoo! Personals

SERIES OF SHOTS

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same men v.o. reading their letters but now their voices fade from old to young, from young to old, sophisticated to redneck, courteous to vulgar, and in one extreme case male to female.

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NIGHT

She sits down at the computer disparagingly, not expecting much. She opens up her browser and logs into Yahoo! Personals once again, this time she goes back to looking through the men seeking ads again. After laughing at a few more and being shocked by a couple advertising for sexual favors she runs across:

ANN'S POV

ANN (O.S.)

"Nice guy seeks fun/romantic relationship."

WILLIAM (V.O.)

Hi there. Okay I will cut to the chase, girls don't want nice guys, they don't want honest guys who are open. So it looks like I stand no chance in a relationship . . .
 . wanna prove me wrong? My only limitation is I haven't got a car. I love to kiss, cuddle, dance, maybe more if the mood is right, but I am waiting. I love computers, reading, movies, etc . . .
 can be VERY fun to be around,

if the person I am with is
fun too would ad this

(PS Only looking for a local
relationship)

ANN

ANN

Well, his spelling could be
better but . . .

Ann writes a letter in response.

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I bet I can prove you wrong.
I've always wanted a nice
guy. I live in Bristol. Write
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Ann clicks "Submit Entry."

INT. BEDROOM - 3 A.M.

Ann is lying on her bed talking on the phone. Still
dressed in her day clothes she looks tired but content.
She is playing with her cat and sorting her CD folder.

ANN

When I wrote that I lived in
Bristol I didn't think you
would email me back.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Well, I have tried long
distance relationships before
and well, it just never
works.

ANN

I promise if you give me a
chance I won't hurt you.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Sure . . . I've heard that
before.

ANN

No, really. Whatever, if you
don't believe me I am not
going to try to convince you.
But we've talked for hours
now and we really click, you
know we do. And I love you
already.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

I could definitely love you,
I . . .

ANN

You don't have to say it.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

I just don't think this will
work out.

ANN

Well it's your loss, but if
you think you want to give me
a try I will be here.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

O . . . okay . . . maybe I will
talk to you later.

ANN

Later.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Bye, I love you. (click)

Ann pushes her CD folder on the floor and rolls up in her
covers holding her cat.

ANN

He'll call back Powder.

MONTAGE

We see her green digital clock ticking off the hours and Ann rolling sleeplessly in her bed. Silhouettes of a man putting his arms around her at the movie theatre fading into pictures of a her and a man looking up into the stars together and this fades into darkness.

ANN'S POV

Her eye's open suddenly and startled by the phone she sits straight up. As she reaches for it she looks at the clock and sees that it says 9 A.M.

Ann sees her cat come running in the room and jump on her lap.

ANN

Hello?

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Hey, umm, Ann, I didn't call too early did I?

ANN

No.

WILLIAM

I was afraid I would wake your parents, or they would answer or . . . umm, Ann, are you still interested in maybe meeting.

ANN

Yes.

WILLIAM

Cool.

Ann has been looking at her shelf, she looks up at the ceiling and the patterns form into two people in a loving embrace.

ANN

Did I tell you that your pictures of you on your website are just gorgeous.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Umm, yes.

ANN

I can't wait to hold you.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Me too.

ANN

I think we'll fit perfectly.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Huh?

ANN

(giggles) Nevermind.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

We see Ann's two story split foyer house from

WILLIAM'S POV

there are several cars in the drive way in various conditions. Her father is working under the front side of a camper. From behind we hear

FRIEND (O.S.)

You gonna be okay?

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Sure man, see you tomorrow.

FRIEND (O.S.)

Okay, later.

We see the car William has arrived in drive off and he picks up his bookbag, some clothes spilling out the side. As he looks up we see Ann come walking out of the front door. She comes down the steps towards him, a little hesitant at first then quickening her pace.

ANN AND WILLIAM

William, 21, slightly tall, dressed in a very bright green and black swirl patterned button down shirt and shorts. He carries himself with false confidence.

ANN

I was worried you weren't really going to come.

WILLIAM

Well, yeah, I was a little nervous too. But I would never do something like that. Just a sec k?

ANN

Huh?

William walks over to her father.

WILLIAM

Ahem.

Her father pulls himself from under the camper and looks blankly at William. William reaches out his hand gingerly and her father takes it. They give a quick firm shake. William looks at the grease on his hand and makes a point not to wipe it off.

WILLIAM

Nice to meet you.

FATHER

Yes.

William, just strong enough to not be taken aback by this cold greeting walks back to Ann.

ANN

What was that all about?

WILLIAM

Just wanted to be polite.

ANN

I can't believe he even
acknowledged your existence.

WILLIAM

He barely did.

ANN

He has never talked to one of
my boyfriends before at all.

WILLIAM

He seems nice enough though.

They start to walk around to the back of the house.
William and Ann are very aware of their bodies as they
take each others hands. They continue to get closer and
closer together during their conversation.

WILLIAM

What did you want to do
today?

ANN

Well my mom's making dinner
of course and we can just
spend time and get to know
each other. You can stay
pretty late before my mom
takes you to your hotel.

WILLIAM

Too bad I can't stay here.

They sit down on the porch swing.

WILLIAM

I like your house. Split
foyer's are cool. My Pa's a
carpenter you know.

ANN

You're right, it's a split
foyer!

William moves a lot closer to Ann. Ann looks at him and doesn't protest, in fact she hugs him close.

WILLIAM

You're so sweet.

They give a mutual kiss. Then look at each other. Obviously the first kiss wasn't enough because they immediately embrace in another longer kiss. William finally breaks it and looks around.

WILLIAM

Umm, is your mom around.

ANN

Don't worry about her, she
could care less what we do.

WILLIAM

I just don't want to cause
any problems.

ANN

Don't worry so much.

WILLIAM

Okay.

They get back to kissing, but this only last a few seconds because her mom walks out the back door.

MOM

Hey, what do you all want to
eat?

William is obviously flustered.

WILLIAM

Whatcha got?

ANN'S POV

Ann's mom and William continue to talk MOS, but Ann just looks longingly at William. Above his shoulder she sees two birds flying around squawking at each other, they look aggravated, as if they are fighting. But they settle onto a branch and sit next to each other, slowly jumping closer to one another.

WILLIAM AND ANN

WILLIAM

Ann?

ANN

Oh, what did you decide for dinner.

WILLIAM

Nothing really sounded good, but we're having chicken.

ANN

What do you mean nothing sounded good?

WILLIAM

Just not too hungry.

Pitch

Pitch:

Here is the story of a young woman living a life out of balance. Saddened by past experiences she is in a depression. All it takes to awaken a little hope is a good friend and a young man. Watch how she makes her life work for her via the internet in "Ann's Struggle."



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"ANN'S STRUGGLE"

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Baer William Bradford



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My Short Fiction: English 101

The Dive

Arching slowly over to examine the water from the brink of the jagged, rocky precipice I realize I may be making a mistake. My legs begin to quiver slightly from the slight breeze rising from the chilled water below. I nervously shift my weight from one foot to another causing little, sharp pieces of rock to scratch and rub into my hard callused feet. I sluggishly open and close my tired, heavy eyelids to slowly adjust them to the brilliant light reflecting off the crystal azure water beneath the gently sloping cliff upon which I am standing. Below, the stream cuts through a gully carrying water through the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. The water that I look over is part of the popular Smoky Mountain attraction the Y, and I am about to fearlessly leap into the pool of water below for the first time.

Slowly surveying my beautiful surroundings I see the trees of the Great Smoky Mountains towering above me in all directions, like a wall of evergreen. The brilliant shades of green fade into a haze of blue as, from the tops of the timeless mountains, the trees appear to connect with the crisp unpolluted sky above. The bright almost blinding, brilliant blue, sky holds a few wisps of still, ashen-white, cirrus clouds. The sky is in stark contrast to the dark water below.

Glancing down into the churning water I notice that the dark pool I am going to fearlessly dive into is somewhat shallow. Several of the boulders in the depths of the stream look suspiciously sharp and uneven, but this could be an illusion caused by the rippling of the ever moving water.

Gazing into the depths of the water I can see small rainbow trout flitting slowly then swiftly from stone to stone. These fish are like dark bats in the way that they slowly move and then suddenly change direction diving right towards you. The stream is white and roaring, as if it is growling, farther up the gully. This gives me another excuse to have apprehension about jumping in, after all what if the current pulls me under because the water is too swift for me to swim?

I try not to think about my fears and concentrate on relaxing. I loosen up my body slightly, roll my shoulders to get the tightness and aching kinks out of my neck, take a long breath, and slowly let my chest press the air through my slightly parted lips. I slowly close my eyes to the swirling water and raise my head towards the beaming sun. I can see red and orange patterns swirling on the insides of my eyelids. I sniff the distinctive scent of the mountain air. This smell is like no other yet reminds me of many other natural aromas such as fresh mushrooms, thin cedar wood chips, freshly mown grass, old, musty books, and a sealed dusty, basement. With my eyes still slightly shut I can hear the low murmur of water splashing on the banks of the stream. A bird chirrup noisily in a near tree startling me into action.

I tense my body abruptly open my eyes, ignoring the chill down my spine as a cool, brisk breeze tickles my long thin leg hairs. I glance one last time into the murky water below and then tighten my legs and bend over ever so slightly. I

The Dive

crouch a bit and then leap away from the rocky, grey precipice and out into the empty space above the water. I glance up, down and left, right swinging my long, wet, hair and causing it to whip my back and shoulders sharply leaving a sting.

My surroundings are a blur of blue and green. I think not of smells nor sights but only of the air rushing quickly by me and the water below barreling up to meet me. Then looking down I prepare to hit the water feet first. My fearless leap is about to end and soon I will arrive unhurt but winded, cold, and wet on the opposite bank.

Groups of Three
by
I William Bradford

"Hey Dan see ya at 3:30," I, Baer William Bradford, called as I ran down the hallway, "I've got to go catch the bus!"

"Okay, man, see ya then," hollered back Dan.

I walked down the stairs of Farragut High School and leaped down the last few steps, tripping and barely regaining my balance and managing not to fall on my face.

"Whoa, that was close," I thought, "I better be careful today. After all accidents come in groups of three."

I burst out of the building, disregarding the new freshman that were wandering about me with looks of confusion on their faces. "They'll get used to it," I thought. "After all, this is only the first day, and a half day at that." It was a day that I meant to live to the fullest. Alas, that was not to be. I did not know how this day would turn out as I approached my fellow senior, Jonathan Smitson.

"Hey, Jonathan, see ya at 3:55"

"What do you mean 3:55? We're going at 1:30. In fact, I just finished talking to Dan about it," said Jonathan skeptically.

"I better find our friend, Daniel," I said. "Wait here, Jonathan."

But after a few minutes of looking for Dan, which caused me to miss the bus, I decided to ride over to Dan's house with Jonathan.

As we left the Farragut senior parking lot, I turned on the CD player in Jonathan's car so that we could blare some heavy metal at the freshmen courtesy of one of Jonathan's favorite musical groups, Marilyn Manson. "They may be sadistic but they sure can play," I remarked as we crossed the Kroger parking lot. I glanced back at Kroger, relieved to not be working that afternoon.

When we got to Dan's neighborhood, View Harbour, home to the snobbiest people in the suburb of Farragut, Jonathan proceeded to follow my bus. "Go back and we'll see if Dan gets off at the next stop", I yelled over the loud music. We did this a few more times and then went to Dan's house to wait for him to come home. After I called my mom and told her our change of plans, Jonathan, Dan, and I proceeded to Farragut Ten Theater to catch the 1:30 showing of Mortal Kombat.

I choose to ride in Jonathan's car because it "was" much cooler. Jonathan's car "was" red with a good, loud speaker system and Dan's "is" white with a radio that barely picks up Z94.3, the local radio station that caters to the "alternative" crowd of Knoxville. As Jonathan drove down Center Cross road on the way out of View Harbour, I popped out the CD and tuned the radio to Z94.3, which was playing Urge Overkill's You'll be a Woman Soon from the Pulp Fiction sound track. I turned this up to a deafening level, and began to sing along.

"Hey, baby, what's up?" I hollered at Michelle, a girl that Jonathan liked.

"Look, Jonathan, it's that middle schooler you think is so hot."

Jonathan glanced to his left and then back at the intersection, but he had glanced a little too long. A red blur approached from the left and time slowed down.

"Jonathan, look out!"

Groups of Three

"Oh h*{!"

Jonathan tried to apply pressure to the breaks and swerved to the left.

The red blur began to squeal and turn to its left. Then the red blur slowly became the shape of a car, but not just any car. This car seemed to have the unusual notion that entangling itself with Jonathan's car would be a fine way to get its driver from point A to point B. I did not agree that this was the best way to proceed, but I had no control over the situation. So, I did the best I could do to ignore the problem. This, of course, was an impossibility and, instead, I thought about the fact that I would never go to the Senior Prom, college, or my wedding. Instead of my past flashing before my eyes I thought about what my funeral would be like. After all, with the hood of Jonathan's car coming up at me it was hard to be anything but pessimistic.

The collision was full of noises and horrible images. The noise of the cars ripping into each other was piercing. It was like a screech, explosion, and ripping, all at the same time. Seeing the hood folding in on itself was very frightening. One of the things that went through my mind was, "Metal isn't supposed to do that." I thought that my life was going to come to an end or at the very least I was going to be mangled by the approaching hood. Then the screeching stopped as the red car realized that perhaps going through Jonathan's car would not be such a good idea after all, and in its embarrassment, the car stopped.

Then time accelerated back to normal speed.

I looked myself over and was relieved to see that I was still in one piece. Jonathan was also still in one piece, but Jonathan's car was not quite as lucky. The boy in the other car, a Junior named D.J., was unhurt as well. Dan backed down the hill and got I out of the car. Jonathan and I then proceeded to walk around the car, cursing at the wreckage and our general stupidity. A small group of View Harbour residents gathered as we all waited for the police to come. I called my mom. She arrived quickly and comforted me. The cop arrived and everyone (except Jonathan) made a statement to the cop. My mom then took me home.

All this happened fairly quickly for me and I was still kind of stunned. It took until I laid down in my bed for me to realize how lucky I was to be alive. I told everyone I knew about the accident. Fortunately bad things do not always come in groups of three because I am still with the living and nothing bad has happened to me since the wreck, unless missing Mortal Kombat can be considered a tragedy.

I do not think about the wreck as much as I did the first day after the accident. The wreck began to become more and more of a faded memory as the days went on and even the pain in my shoulder has all but disappeared, otherwise I would not be typing this narrative right now. The one lasting effect from the accident is an awakening I experienced. This awakening can be best described by the poem *Beauty and Duty* by Ellen Sturgis Hooper.

I slept and dreamed that life was beauty.

I woke-and found that life was duty.

I intended to live life to the fullest from now on by doing such things as running for student office, for one never knows when the third accident will rear its nasty head.

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Thirst

As a young child I went through an ordeal that did not seem important to me at the time. Later in life, another experience made me realize the importance of this ordeal. These two events happened nearly nine years apart. I was in the hospital with an awful illness when I experienced my ordeal. The second experience happened nine years later in my eighth-grade English class. These two experiences were traumatic and made me understand the lives of others better.

The first experience that led to this understanding happened when I was six. I was in first grade, and, right after Christmas, had contracted a dire strep infection. While in the hospital for a month, I was subjected to the constant prodding and probing of doctors, nurses, and needles. The worst thing that happened to me was not the injections or treatments but a precautionary procedure. The doctors would let me drink a small amount of water orally every thirty minutes. The rest of my sustenance was provided to me by an IV tube. This diet was torturous. I learned to read a clock during the week of my subjection to this torture. I learned this because I wanted to count the minutes until I could have my next bit of Tang flavored ice chips. When I left the hospital I soon forgot the ordeal. I had other things to worry about, like relearning to walk and preparing for the hip surgery I would have in the summer.

My next experience happened during winter nine years later. I was in the Science Seminar program at Cedar Bluff, and my English class was studying the tragic history of the Holocaust. We had studied this topic from many points of view even going so far as to imagine what it would be like to plan and design concentration camps. Of course the students in my class and I had no idea what it was really like to live through the holocaust, that is until we read the biography Night. This depressing account of a young boy's journey to a Nazi concentration camp affected me tremendously. Thinking about the atrocities through which this young Jewish man had lived I had a hard time sleeping at night. I was more concerned with the beatings he took and the harsh treatment he received than I was with something that I did not at first realize I could understand.

During a class discussion one day our English teacher asked us how we felt about this boy's trip to the concentration camp in a crowded box-car. Some people said it must have been horrible that they had no bathrooms and some said being so cramped must have been very uncomfortable. Our English teacher then told us how we would never experience anything like the holocaust personally and that we could never have a full understanding after all none of us had ever even really starved. For some reason this struck me, and I remembered my time in the hospital and my unquenchable thirst. I immediately raised my hand to argue my teacher's point. As I told my story I began to get very emotional, and I even broke into tears. Suddenly I realized how horrible my experience had been, but I also realized something even worse. I began to understand how bad it must have been for the people subjected to the genetic cleansing of Nazi Germany. I realized that if an insignificant experience like mine could make me cry nine years later then the persecution and treatment of people in Germany must have been devastating. I now had a gauge with which to measure human suffering. I could use my experience not only to understand the holocaust better, but to understand the plight of the homeless and many other problems people throughout history have faced.

My experiences, both as a young child and as a young teenager, helped me to understand how hard it has been and is for some people to live. I learned through an insignificant amount of suffering the horrible things people must have experienced during the holocaust. I believe I am a better person because of these experiences. I also believe I can better help

Thirst: Revision 1

society throughout my life because of better understanding of human suffering.

Thirst

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One day during a class discussion our English teacher asked us how we felt about the boy's trip to the concentration camp. Some people said it must have been awful to have no bathrooms on the crowded box-car, and some said being so cramped must have been very uncomfortable. Our English teacher then told us we would never experience anything like the Holocaust personally, and we could never completely understand the suffering of people who endured the Holocaust; after all, none of us had ever even experienced starvation. For some reason this remark caused me to remember my experience in the hospital and my unquenchable thirst. I immediately raised my hand to argue my teacher's point. As I told my story I began to get very emotional, and I even broke into tears. Suddenly, I realized how horrible my experience had

been, but I also realized something worse. I began to understand how horribly unpleasant it must have been for the people subjected to the genetic cleansing of Nazi Germany. I realized that if an insignificant experience like mine could make me cry nine years later, then the persecution and treatment of people in Germany must have been devastating. I now had a gauge with which to measure human suffering. I could use my experience, not only to understand the Holocaust better, but to understand the plight of the homeless and the suffering.

My experiences, both as a young child and as a young teenager, helped me to understand how hard it is for some people to survive in the world. I learned through an insignificant amount of suffering the horrible things people must have experienced during the Holocaust. I believe I am a better person because of these experiences. I can better help society throughout my life because of my better understanding of human suffering.

Earthlings Are Helpless

Fffff. Zzzzz. Tick. Tick. Fuzzzz. Beep. Hello, come in base X. This is imperial scout Reab reporting for the Martian invasion convoy. Hopefully you are reading me because this message is urgent. I repeat urgent! We must complete our plans to invade earth for the oomans are nearly helpless. Except for an occasional educational distributor or labor instructor the oomans are almost mindless, and they are subject to mind control. The oomans are completely innocent, but they do have one unusual attribute. They have two brains, one internal and one external. Please pay close attention to the following report so you can better understand ooman mind control and the use of their two brains.

The oomans have two minds, one within their meager bodies the other in a smaller exoskeleton attached to a huge eye ball. The use of their flesh brain is limited to the study of things they call ove, ate, orals, thics, rithmetic, anguage, cience, and ports. These ideas I am unable to understand, and they can only be comprehended by creatures such as oomans, who have little understanding of such important things as war and fine food. (According to the earth god Tohn Jralvolta they drown their strips of oil-doused, starch based roots in a pale yellow, white egg product; yuck). Their incredible outer brain is used for such higher order thinking skills as omputer_ames, ord_rocessing, raphic_rts, and umber_hrunching. They access their brain through the appendages at the end of their hands. They either press random buttons on a complex pad, which contains a assortment of runic figures or grasp on to something the oomans call a joystick (apparently an oxymoron, because they scream while controlling these "joy"sticks, which they use to kill such evil fiends as Bowser, the Koopa Troopas, and M. Bison). In any case these actions cause figures on the shining eyeball to scroll, shoot, jump, or appear in randomly generated figures. They can also use their second brain to make reports that produce different effects on two groups of people. These groups of people are the educational distributors and labor instructors. Based upon what is in these reports the educational distributors and labor instructors either give the oomans praise or they mark up their report with blood issued from something called a pall-o-int-ben.

These educational distributors and labor instructors have complete control over the oomans. Labor instructors can control the flesh minds of the oomans by mentioning such ominous things as *the raise*, *the firing*, and *the lay off*. Apparently the labor instructor can control how much flimsy, green tree by-product an ooman receives. An unusual fact is that the oomans also call this green material *bread* or *lettuce* (the words for two of their favorite foods), which is unusual since they trade the green material and do not eat it. Education distributors have even more control over a oomans life. They can fail a ooman during the ooman's training at the education institution, and keep him or her from even getting an adequate labor assignment later in life. An ooman must appease the wrath of the educational distributors by bringing them crisp, burgundy fruit and by following a

Bradford 2

procedure called "cissing pup." Apparently it is dangerous to "ciss pup" as one may receive a "brown nose" in the process. One control that both labor instructors and educational distributors have over the rest of the oomans is that they choose what materials oomans must ord_rocess.

The oomans are also controlled by the VT. This large eyeball (often larger than the one attached to their second brain) can be used to watch programs about humorous groups of oomans, to interact with ideo_ames, and view such important events as the JO verdict. The VT is used to convince oomans that they need such things as Glints by Clairol (something that kicks Oriental men because eight is great), beer (a liquid that allows oomans to scale mountains and attract desirable members of the opposite sex), and Rogaine with Monoxidil (which everyone wants while no one knows what it is). The VT is also used by middle aged males to monitor the weather extensively. These male oomans will often sit for hours switching from the meteorological update broadcast to Andy Griffith (one of the ooman gods, also known affectionately by older oomans as Matlock), and Wohn Jayne movies (yet another ooman god). Apparently the educational distributors and labor instructors use VT to keep oomans from considering to much ove, ate, orals, and thics while they are not ord_rocessing.

If we can capture and destroy the few labor instructors and educational distributors we stand a good chance of capturing earth. The oomans will also make good slaves due to their susceptibility to mind control, their ability to endure boredom induced by such actions as ord_rocessing, and their tendency to be distracted by anything on the shining eyeballs. Please continue the invasion immediately or at least send an imperial space jet to get me out of this place. I am tired of all thinking about all of this ooman gibberish. This is imperial scout Reab signing off. Fzzzzz. Beep.

My Short Fiction: English 102

Rampion

Baer William Bradford

Paul McBride

English 102

Tuesday, March 11, 1997

Rampion^{*}
Eve's problem

"I dearly want a child," complained Eve. "But, I am not sure I am willing to go through the pain God has destined I will go through to receive a young one."

"Eve, Who are you talking to?" Adam asked as he peeked his head into the kitchen.

"Myself, and I suppose my guardian angel," she replied.

"Be careful what you tell your angel, you never know what may happen. Our God takes our wishes and desires very literally."

"True dear, but I still wish . . ."

"What do you wish Eve?"

"I wish childbirth were as easy for me as it is for the Good Lady Gothel's rampion," lamented Eve. "To be able to transplant a part of myself and grow a new being, like and yet unlike myself, would make birthing so much easier."

With hesitation in his voice, Adam said, "While I believe it to be a bad idea I understand your position and I have a suggestion."

"What do you know of childbirth?" ridiculed Eve.

"Do I not hoe the land; do I not plant the seed; do I not protect the harvest?" inquired Adam.

"This is true," conceded Eve.

"Indeed, I do all of these things as I tend lady Gothel's garden. Being one of her closest employees I believe I may ask her a favor."

"Do pray tell," Eve said.

"Perhaps she can use one of her many magically incantations to form a child from you in the way that a rampion brings forth offspring. After all does she not control the plants and animals on her land in the way that she sees fit?"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Eve.

"Therefore no longer worry, I will take care of everything," boasted Adam.

Lady Gothel's solution

Lady Gothel was quite helpful and kind to her faithful worker Adam. She presented him with a magical powder made of dried rampion. She instructed him to take a lock of Eve's hair and plant it in

their garden. Adam, and only Adam, then would water the plant with a solution made of the rampion powder, some of his precious bodily fluid, and water from a quickly flowing stream. She told him to tend the plant and it would grow large, lush, and green and, come harvesting time, all his work would pay off.

Lady Gothel only demanded one thing for her gift of life. She declared that the young child must stay in her house except for evening Friday to evening Sunday when she could stay with her rightful parents. Eve and Adam happily agreed and when harvest came in August a beautiful young girl sprang from the ground. She had grown in the tuber of the plant as a child does in a mother's womb. Indeed the child was not unlike any other child except her hair was tinted green and had the texture and smell of mown grass and fresh soil. Therefore Eve named her Rampion after the plant from which she sprang forth. They all lived happily for many years.

Rampion's folly

So, it came to pass that Rampion grew to a ripe age of sixteen. Her parents were passing into old age and she no longer visited them for they could no longer care for her. Lacy Gothel stayed young by mystic means and so she was able to care for Rampion. But Rampion felt as if something was missing in her life, and she was not satisfied with her lot.

One day a young prince happened to ride by Lady Gothel's abode around dusk. Lady Gothel was at the far end of her expansive garden working and Rampion was alone tending the flower box outside her window. She happily sang a rhyme that Lady Gothel taught her:

"I see the plants and the plants see me.

I be a plant and the plant be me.

I take a bite of the leaf of the seed.

I take a plant and I make it part of me."

Rampion sang her song without contemplating the words.

The prince then cleared his throat, "Ahem, what is a beautiful young lady such as yourself singing such a silly song for."

Rampion was startled by his voice and stopped singing mid-verse. She looked up to the prince's face and immediately realized what was missing in her life. Without even answering the prince's question she ran to his side and asked to be taken away from this place to live a life of ease by his side his princess. The prince was of marrying age and was having little luck finding a bride. Therefore he conceded, and they rode off together to his father's castle where they were wed the next day.

As they were leaving Lady Gothel was walking back to her house and she saw them ride away. She called after Rampion sadly, "My dear you do not understand the folly of what you are doing."

Rampion

Rampion was out of earshot, though, and she could not hear Lady Gothel's cry.

"My dear girl, little do you know the plight you are in. You are of the plant and without my supervision you will wilt as my gardens would if I were not here to watch over them. No matter how sufficient a gardener, a man can not take care of you as I can."

Lady Gothel's care of Rampion through out the week and throughout her life had been by necessity. To keep her alive she needed to be under constant observation by her creator. When she entered the castle of the king she immediately began to feel strangled among the population, much like a flower amongst weeds. She lost the green tint in her hair and it became dry and brittle. Within a week she had shriveled and died as an uprooted sapling is wont to do when pulled from the ground. Now the story of Rampion is done. Eat your cabbage, eat your greens, if you do not you will become very lean.

My interpretation of the original story of "Rapunzel" is not completely clear. I do see that the woman (Rapunzel's mother) was greedy and therefore paid for her sin with the loss of her child. Yet, the man and woman are left out of the story once Rapunzel appears. I believe there is a good relationship between Lady Gothel and Rapunzel in the story, and Rapunzel betrays this relationship by plotting to leave with the Kings' son. Lady Gothel is jealous, of course, and they both pay. But, as often happens in a Grimm's fairy tale, happiness prevails and Rapunzel and the King's son live happily ever after. Note that the Prince thinks of Rapunzel as his wife when he is wandering, this is probably because they have already had sexual relations, which is evident since she had children when he found her in the desert.

I thought it would be interesting to further emphasize the problems that the parents had getting a child, and make Lady Gothel appear even nicer by having her be the solution to their problem. I then wanted to make Rapunzel look bad for leaving lady Gothel and I left out the implication of sexual relations with the Prince and emphasized sexual implications in the first part of the story when Adam and Eve get a child. I have also attempted to emphasize the names in the story and the importance of plants in the story. Note the relationship between creationism, Adam and Eve, and genetic science, plants sprouting from one another, as well as the mysticism of Lady Gothel. The main reason I chose to rewrite "Rapunzel" was to tell it in a way that I could understand since I believe many of the themes in the original story become cluttered.

* *Rapunzel*

Baer William Bradford

Paul McBride

English 102

Thursday, February 06, 1997

The Talent Show Incident

or Cereal Killers

Occasionally, very ordinary objects can bring back particularly odd memories. Several mornings ago, I was devouring cereal for breakfast in the cafeteria. The cereal was enclosed in a little box, and on the front of the container were three little men: Snap, Crackle and Pop. The names of these personifications of onomatopoeia and the small box itself brought back a flood of memories. As I attempted to pry the box open, a relatively futile task due to the inept design and placement of the perforation, I felt myself being swept away, back in time, to the summer after my sophomore year of high school.

During the sweltering months of June and early July, I attended a program known affectionately by high school honors students who participated in it, as The Governor's School for the Sciences at The University of Tennessee. I was involved in several classes during these two months. While these classes were important in developing our career goals, the activities and meals at Governor's School were what held most of the student's interest. We always looked forward to breakfast, lunch, and dinner. During meal time we were able to chat with our friends and catch up on the newest gossip. We could either plan pranks, or discuss the upcoming talent show; however, Pete, Joe, Geoffrey, and I combined the two topics.

Sitting in the cafeteria, perusing my thoughts of Governor's School and playing with my cacophonous food, I came to realize that we utilized much more time planning the most outrageous talent show act ever than we did on our class research project. Every breakfast for almost a fortnight, approximately fifty little boxes of various cereals, including the infamous Rice Crispies, would somehow make their way into our Jansports. We gathered all of these boxes in Geoffrey's room and constructed a pyramid with them. About a week before the talent show, we began to glue them together in order to create a three-dimensional likeness of the phrase "Ahh Yeah." This expression had been our

catch phrase since the beginning of Governor's School. Geoffrey and I were to present a medley of Nirvana songs at the talent show and we were planning to place this work of art on stage.

Unfortunately, as we were nearing the final stages of production on our cereal box structure, the rest of our boxes were stolen right off my bed where I had placed them in a pillow case. The only evidence was a note placed on my pillow that said, "Snap, Crackle, & Pop wuz here!" I spent the whole evening searching for the culprits, only to find out that Geoffrey had betrayed me. He, Joe, and Pete were behind the conspiracy. After reconciliation we continued to build the words, and by the day of the talent show, we had formed the most beautiful statue of the words "Ahh Yeah" ever.

It took an entire campus van to transport our cereal box creation to the UC Ballroom where we awaited our turn on stage. Little did the authorities in charge of Governor's School know of our maniacal plan. After a few silly acts, including our friend Ben's pathetic rendition of Lunch Lady Land by Adam Sandler, it was time for Geoffrey and me to present our act. We set up our equipment, consisting of a guitar, an amp, and the immaculate cereal structure and walked on stage.

Geoffrey quietly tuned his guitar. In the background the serene music of the song Polly, by Nirvana, began to gently emanate from our CD player. A silent few in the audience clapped a little as Geoffrey began to strum along to the melancholy tune. I started to crone to the music in a low tone. Waving my hair in front of my face, I acted out the part of a depressed and slightly paranoid rock star. As the song came to an end, I could see we had formed a mellow tone in the room. Immediately after the last chord of the song, Geoffrey started playing an upbeat and jiving riff on his guitar. Then the beat slowed and I began to sing, "Rape me. Rape me." The crowd of students and administrators was aghast; they hadn't expected a controversial song. The beat continued on in a cycle of slow riffs and upbeat solos, slowly building to a pinnacle of noise. Suddenly, Geoffrey went ballistic producing a loud, violent explosion of discordant guitar "music."

I was screaming now and my voice was harsh. In time to Geoffrey's crescendo, I quickened my dancing and convulsed to the front of the stage where I head banded violently. Geoffrey's sudden entourage of music sent me over the edge. I began to kick our cereal box structure into the audience. Many of the spectator's mouths were agape and there were several screams and exclamations of surprise. I shuffled from the left to the right side of the stage while flailing my feet into the vowels and

consonants. Corn, Bran, Wheat, and Rice filled the air as boxes of cereal exploded upon impact. One box hit an administrator in the head, and several student's skillfully dodged consumable projectiles. I gave one final thrust with my foot and destroyed the A. The crowd was in "Ahh." The last blow sent a few boxes flying into an overhang on the ceiling. Unfortunately, this last kick also broke the straps on my sandals. My flip flops flew into an unexpected spectator's lap. The crowd burst into laughter and applause. We were a smashing success.

As we bowed and took leave of the stage, one of the resident assistants, a large woman named Priscilla, began to yell at us. She said we had no right to deviate from our planned performance. I argued that we hadn't issued a plan and she realized that she had no recourse against us. As we took our seats in the audience, the administrators of Governor's School congratulated Geoffrey and me for giving a rousing performance. All was well. Our only regret was the loss of our beloved cereal.

Thinking back on this moment made me realize how much enjoyment simple things such as a few boxes of cereal can give people. I contemplated the cereal on my spoon and took another bite of my Rice Crispies while slowly listening to the crackle in my mouth. I quaffed some orange juice and then rose from my seat. After depositing my tray on the conveyer in the back of the room, I went back to the cafeteria line. I quickly snatched a box of Raisin Bran from the stack and then stealthily placed it into my back pack. Doing this gave me a cheap thrill and kept the memory of the summer before my junior year of high school alive in my mind.

Baer William Bradford

Paul McBride

English 102

Thursday, February 06, 1997

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or Cereal Killers

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Sitting in the cafeteria, considering my thoughts of Governor's School and playing with my cacophonous food, I came to realize that we utilized much more time planning the most outrageous talent show act ever than we did on our class research project. Every breakfast for almost a fortnight, approximately fifty little boxes of various cereals, including the infamous Rice Crispies, would somehow make their way into our Jansports. We gathered all of these boxes in Geoffrey's room and constructed a pyramid with them. About a week before the talent show, we began to glue them together in order to create a three-dimensional likeness of the phrase "Ahh Yeah." This expression had been our catch phrase since the beginning of Governor's School. Geoffrey and I were to present a medley of

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My Short Fiction: English 364

September 6, 1999

Baer William Bradford

Weekend Distraction

The last drop of Sunny-delight isn't always the last drop. If you tilt it a little bit further back and stick your tongue in a little you can pull one more drop out of the bottle. Of course if it is a can you don't want to try this, but Sunny-D doesn't taste good in a can anyway...

Watching him try to drink that last drop of orange juice, I wonder if we asked him could he tell us how is president of SGA? Yet, he is well-rounded on events around the globe. Who wouldn't be when world news is available at the click of a mouse?

We need to get him out more often.

"Carl."

"Wait a minute."

"Okay."

Dan coughs from the doorway.

"Come on Carl, you've been sitting at your desk all day."

"No I haven't."

Dan crosses his arms, "Yes, Carl, you have."

You would think that Carl would know what time it is, the clock is right up there in the right hand corner of his screen.

"Fuck, I have, umm, okay let me start this one last download."

The sound of Dan's teeth grinding makes me interrupt him before this gets out of control, "Can't you do it later."

"Okay, okay."

His humming is incessant...

Dessert

September 21, 1999

Baer William Bradford

Dessert

Unlike the newly remodeled “University Café” down the hall the lighting is dim in this cafeteria. Yet, despite the flickering florescent bulbs and the cracks in the trays, quite a few professors, staff and students still dine here. Some prefer the acoustics of the room, which creates a less crowded atmosphere. Others note that the food is cheaper and in greater variety. Todd comes here because of her.

Meals are about more than food for Todd. He briefly scans the seating area from the outside window. Closing his umbrella he fumbles with the door while keeping an eye on his surroundings. She is not there yet.

From his normal seat he can view both entrances, all three check-out counters and around eighty percent of the room. He takes a book from his backpack and scans a few sentences before beginning to monitor the room. Noticing a few people going into line he realizes she might be getting her food already. If she is then he might be able to start a conversation about the selection of meat today, Red Snapper. Mary loves Red Snapper.

She wasn't in line but in case she walks by now he has the fish on his plate. Mary likes the meats they serve here and Todd knows she will be impressed by his selection. He cuts off a bit and chews on it without really noticing the taste. Sometimes he doesn't even start his meal, much less finish it before he has to go to class. Mary loves this fish though and he tries to imagine what the texture of it must feel like on her tongue. Todd is sure her delicate mouth is much more suited to enjoying food.

The meal is good though and he gets a bit distracted. Looking up from his peas he sees a wisp of red hair disappear behind the juice machine in line. Mary is over there. He can't make himself get up, knowing there is no reason for him to go back in line since he is out of cash. He has eating all the Snapper too, no way to start a conversation with her now. The contents of his backpack are quickly strewn across his small table. He manages to find sixty cents. He takes two quarters and runs to the line.

Timing it perfectly he grabs a cookie right as she grabs the one next to his.

“I love sugar cookies, don't you,” he says.

“Not really.”

Todd grabs a chocolate chip cookie and follows Mary to the line.

“That’ll be sixty cents.”

Todd puts the fifty cents on the counter then tries to get Mary’s attention.

“Can I borrow a dime?”

“Don’t worry about it sir, just head on through.”

Todd stumbles to his table and drops the cookie on his plate. He waits until Mary is done with the rest of her meal and then times his bites with hers enjoying the chocolate chips. She doesn’t like sugar cookies, that is a good thing to know thinks Todd.

Baer William Bradford

English 364

So White

It is so white. The clouds seem to be hanging right on top of the cake, and occasionally a little wisp of fog floats directly from the church entrance, and covers the top tier. Bits of rice are embedded around my, that is my likeness', feet. I can't breath. I can't handle all this.

"Hey Steve."

The lines under Steve's eyes have thickened over the last three hours.

"Bill we have really got to talk. Things are getting a bit tense in Washington."

"Which one."

"Both."

"Just stop, we are going to relax for one day. Not just me, you too. Damn, even during the ceremony I could see your hands shaking. It is not everyday that I get to redo my vows with Melinda."

A cheer breaks out and silences our conversation. Steve grabs me and drags me back over to the gazebo that has been set up in the middle of Main Street, Seattle. Although I would have preferred a more private affair at home Melinda insisted that we reread our vows here, where I grew up. And Steve reminded me that due to the court case it would be good for me to establish a more approachable, likeable image. Image, what does that have to do with software.

Standing next to Melinda I am calmer. Her subtle kiss on my cheek reminds me what is bothering me most of all. If I lose this court case, or worse yet if we don't get the OS shipped by year's end I will look like a fool to my kids.

"Cut the cake," says the crowd of spectators.

The knife swipes right through a bit of fog before passing into the cake.

Stepping back from the window I feel a bit nervous. My fifteen-minute break elapsed, I must go back to writing my closing statements before I take the plane to D.C.

“So, you ready to make a fool of yourself dad.”

“Rory, why must you constantly be so positive.”

As usual Rory crept into the office so that he could mock me.

“You know what you are doing is wrong.”

“But that is what you don’t understand, you think I am a megalomaniac, but I am not a maniac, it is the public that misunderstands our goals. We don’t just make software to make money, I have a vision, something you won’t ever have if you don’t get your act together.”

“You’ll lose.”

With that Rory practically stomps out of the office. Melinda rushes in after him.

“I’m sorry I told him not to.”

“Not to what, not to discourage me, to misunderstand me, to interrupt me on the most important day of all of our lives.”

“Obviously you don’t need me here.”

“No, no, it is okay, I’m sorry. Come here and stand by the window with me.”

The way Melinda kisses my cheek expresses something different each time. This time it tells me to try my best, and no matter what she will be there.

Baer William Bradford

English 364

Tuesday, November 02, 1999

The Talent Show Incident
or Cereal Killers

Occasionally, ordinary objects can bring back odd memories. I've just sat down at my favorite cafeteria booth in an attempt to eat my breakfast cereal. The cereal is enclosed in one of those little boxes that explode when you try and open them. On the front of the package are every college students' guides to nutritional health: Snap, Crackle and Pop. Their names and the small box itself bring back a flood of memories. As I attempt to pry the box open, a relatively futile task due to the inept design and placement of the perforation, I daydream.

During the June and early July of my sophomore year of high school, I attended a program for high school honors students called The Governor's School for the Sciences. Although, the classes we took there were important in developing our career goals, it was activities and meals at Governor's School that held most of the students' interest. During mealtime we were able to chat with our friends and catch up on the newest gossip. We could either plan pranks or discuss the upcoming talent show; however, Pete, Joe, Geoffrey, and I combined the two topics.

Sitting in the cafeteria, considering my thoughts of Governor's School and playing with my cacophonous food, I realize that we utilized much more time planning the most outrageous talent show act ever than we did on our class research project. Every morning for nearly two weeks, approximately fifty little boxes of various cereals, including the infamous Rice Crispies, would somehow make their way into our Jansports and Eastpacks. We gathered all of these boxes in Geoffrey's room and constructed a pyramid with them. About a week before the talent show, we began to glue them together in order to build a three-dimensional structure. It spelled out "Ahh Yeah." This expression had been our catch phrase since the beginning of Governor's School. Geoffrey and I were to present a medley of songs by the band Nirvana at the talent show and we were planning to place our work of art on stage.

As we were nearing the final stages of production on our cereal box structure, half of our boxes were stolen right off my bed where I had placed them in a pillow case. The only evidence was a note

placed on my pillow that said, "Snap, Crackle, & Pop wuz here!" I spent the whole evening searching for the culprits, only to find out that Geoffrey had betrayed me. He, Joe, and Pete were behind the conspiracy. After reconciliation we continued to prepare, and by the day of the talent show, we had formed the most beautiful statue of the words "Ahh Yeah" ever seen on UT campus.

It took a packed campus van to transport our cereal box creation to the UC Ballroom where we awaited our turn on stage. Little did the professors and RAs in charge of Governor's School know of our maniacal plan. After a few silly acts, including our friend Ben's pathetic rendition of Lunch Lady Land by Adam Sandler, it was time for Geoffrey and I to present our act. We set up our equipment, consisting of a guitar, an amp, and the immaculate cereal structure, and walked on stage.

Geoffrey quietly tuned his guitar. In the background the serene music of the song Polly, by Nirvana, began to gently emanate from our CD player. A few in the audience clapped a little as Geoffrey began to strum along to the melancholy tune. I started to crone to the music in a low tone. Waving my hair in front of my face, I acted out the part of a depressed and slightly paranoid rock star. As the song came to an end, I could see we had formed a mellow tone in the room. Immediately after the last chord of the song, Geoffrey started playing an upbeat and jiving riff on his guitar. Then the beat slowed and I began to sing, Rape Me." The crowd of students and administrators was aghast; they hadn't expected a controversial song. The beat continued on in a cycle of slow riffs and upbeat solos, slowly building to a pinnacle of noise. Suddenly, Geoffrey went ballistic producing a violent explosion of discordant guitar "music."

I was screaming now and my voice was harsh. In time to Geoffrey's crescendo, I quickened my dancing and convulsed to the front of the stage where I head-banged violently. Geoffrey's sudden entourage of music sent me over the edge. I began to kick our cereal box structure into the audience. Many of the spectator's mouths were agape and there were several screams and exclamations of surprise. I shuffled from the left to the right side of the stage while flailing my feet into the vowels and consonants. Corn, Bran, Wheat, and Rice filled the air as boxes of cereal exploded upon impact. One box hit an administrator in the head, while several students skillfully dodged consumable projectiles. I gave one final thrust with my foot and destroyed the A. The crowd was in "Ahh." The last blow sent a few boxes flying into an overhang on the ceiling. Unfortunately, this last kick also broke the straps on

my sandals. My flip-flops flew into an unexpected spectator's lap. The crowd burst into laughter and applause. Thankfully our cereal killing was successful.

As we bowed and took leave of the stage, one of the resident assistants, a large woman named Priscilla, began to yell at us. She said we had no right to deviate from our planned performance. I argued that we hadn't issued a plan and she realized that she had no recourse against us. As we took our seats in the audience, the administrators of Governor's School congratulated Geoffrey and I for giving a rousing performance. All was well. Our only regret was the loss of our beloved cereal.

Thinking back on this moment makes me realize how much enjoyment simple things such as a few boxes of cereal can give people. I contemplate the cereal on my spoon while listening to the crackling in my mouth. I wash away the noise with some orange juice. After depositing my tray on the conveyer in the back of the room, I slip back to the cafeteria line. While the student worker looks the other way I snatch a box of Raisin Bran from the stack and quickly place it into my Eastpack.

Baer William Bradford

English 364

Tuesday, November 02, 1999

Cereal Killers

Occasionally, ordinary objects bring back odd memories. I've just sat down at my favorite cafeteria booth in an attempt to eat my breakfast cereal. The cereal is enclosed in one of those little boxes that explode when you try to open them. On the front of the package is college student's guide to nutritional health: Snap, Crackle and Pop. Their names and the small box itself bring back a flood of memories. As I attempt to pry the box open, a relatively futile task due to the inept design and placement of the perforation, I daydream.

During June and early July of my sophomore year of high school, I attended a program for high school honors students called The Governor's School for the Sciences. Although the classes we took there were important in developing our career goals, it was intramural sports, the talent show and meals that held most of the students' interest. During mealtime we were able to chat with our friends and catch up on the newest gossip. We could design plays for the next flag-football game, plans pranks or discuss the upcoming talent show; Pete, Joe, Geoffrey, and I combined those last two.

Every morning for nearly two weeks, approximately fifty little boxes of various cereals, including the infamous Rice Crispies, were slipped into our Jansports and Eastpacks. We gathered all of these boxes in Geoffrey's room and constructed a pyramid with them. About a week before the talent show, we began to glue them together to build a three-dimensional structure. It spelled out "Ahh Yeah." This expression had been our catch phrase since the beginning of Governor's School. Geoffrey and I were to present a medley of songs by the band Nirvana at the talent show and would place our work of art on stage.

Nearing the final stages of production on this structure, half the boxes were stolen off my bed where I had them in a pillowcase. The only evidence was a note placed on my pillow that said, "Snap, Crackle, & Pop wuz here!" I spent the whole evening searching for the culprits, only to find out that Geoffrey had betrayed me. He, Joe, and Pete were behind the conspiracy. After reconciliation, we

continued to prepare, and by the day of the talent show, we had formed the most beautiful statue of the words "Ahh Yeah" ever seen.

It took a campus van to transport our cereal box creation to the UC Ballroom where we awaited our turn on stage. Little did the professors and RAs in charge of Governor's School know of our maniacal plan. After a few silly acts, including our friend Ben's pathetic rendition of Lunch Lady Land by Adam Sandler, it was time for Geoffrey and me to present our act. We set up a guitar, an amp, and the immaculate cereal structure, and walked on stage.

Geoffrey quietly tuned his guitar. In the background, the serene music of Nirvana's Polly, gently emanated from our CD player. A few in the audience clapped a little as Geoffrey strummed along to the melancholy tune. I started to croon to the music in a cracking voice. Waving my hair in front of my face, I acted out the part of a depressed and slightly paranoid rock star. As the song came to an end, the audience was lulled and clapped politely. Immediately after the last chord, Geoffrey started an upbeat and jiving riff on his guitar. Then the beat slowed, and I began to sing, Rape Me. The crowd of students and administrators was aghast; they hadn't expected a controversial song. The beat continued on in a cycle of slow riffs and upbeat solos, building to a pinnacle of noise. Suddenly, Geoffrey produced a violent explosion of discordant guitar "music."

I was screaming now, my voice matching the pace of my surging hair. In time to Geoffrey's crescendo, I quickened my dancing and convulsed to the front of the stage where I head-banged violently. Geoffrey broke into the climax of the song and this sent me in a wavering frenzy. I kicked our cereal box structure into the audience. Many of the spectator's mouths were agape, and there were several screams and profane comments. I shuffled from the left to the right side of the stage kicking into the vowels and consonants. Corn, Bran, Wheat, and Rice filled the air as boxes of cereal exploded. One box hit an administrator in the head; several students skillfully dodged consumable projectiles. I gave one final thrust with my foot and destroyed the A. The crowd was "in Ahh." The last blow sent a few boxes flying into an overhang on the ceiling. Unfortunately, this last kick also broke the straps on my sandals. My flip-flops flew into an unexpecting spectator's lap. The crowd burst into laughter and applause. Our cereal killing was successful.

As we bowed, one of the resident assistants, a large woman named Priscilla, yelled at us. She

said we had no right to deviate from our planned performance. I argued that we hadn't issued a plan, and she realized that she had no recourse against us. As we took our seats in the audience, the administrators of Governor's School congratulated Geoffrey and me for giving a rousing performance. All was well, barely.

Thinking back on our performance, I realize how much enjoyment I made out of a few simple boxes. I contemplate the cereal on my spoon while listening to the crackling in my mouth. I wash away the noise with some orange juice. After depositing my tray on the conveyer in the back of the room, I slip back to the cafeteria line. While the student worker looks the other way I snatch a box of Raisin Bran from the stack and quickly place it into my Eastpack.

Baer William Bradford

English 364

Tuesday, December 14, 1999

Cereal Killers

Occasionally, ordinary objects bring back odd memories. I'm sitting down at my favorite cafeteria booth attempting to eat my breakfast cereal, which is enclosed in one of those little boxes that explode when you try to open them. On the front of the package are the college student's guides to nutritional health: Snap, Crackle and Pop. Their names and the small box itself bring back a flood of memories. I attempt to pry the box open, a relatively futile task due to the inept design and placement of the perforation. When it explodes the pebbles of rice bounce across the table. After pouring what is left into my bowl I take my first bite and begin to daydream.

During June and early July of my sophomore year of high school, I attended a program for high school honors students called The Governor's School for the Sciences. Although the classes we took there helped to develop our career goals, intramural sports, the talent show, and meals that held most of the students' interest. During mealtime, we were able to chat with our friends and catch up on the newest gossip. We could design plays for the next flag-football game, plan pranks or discuss the upcoming talent show; Pete, Joe, Geoffrey, and I combined those last two.

Every morning for nearly two weeks we slipped approximately fifty little boxes of various cereals, including the Rice Krispies, into our Jansports and Eastpacks. We gathered all of these boxes in Geoffrey's room and constructed a pyramid with them. About a week before the talent show, we began to glue them together to build a three-dimensional structure. It spelled out "Ahh Yeah." This expression had been our catch phrase since the beginning of camp. At the talent show, Geoffrey and I were to present a medley of songs by Nirvana and would place our work of art on stage.

Nearing the final stages of production on this structure, half the boxes were stolen off my bed where I had them in a pillowcase. The only evidence was a note placed on my pillow that said, "Snap, Crackle, & Pop wuz here!" I spent the whole evening searching for the culprits, only to find out that Geoffrey had betrayed me. He, Joe, and Pete were behind the conspiracy. After reconciliation, we

continued to prepare, and by the day of the talent show, we had formed the most beautiful statue of the words “Ahh Yeah” ever seen.

It took a campus van to transport our cereal box creation to the University Center Ballroom where we awaited our turn on stage. Little did the professors and Resident Assistants in charge know of our maniacal plan. After a few silly acts, including a friend’s pathetic rendition of Adam Sandler’s “Lunch Lady Land,” it was time for Geoffrey and me to present our act. We set up a guitar, an amp, and the immaculate cereal structure, and walked on stage. Geoffrey gave a wink to the head admin, Dr. Kovak, and I took in a deep breath.

Geoffrey quietly tuned his guitar. In the background, the serene, melancholy music of Nirvana’s “Polly,” gently emanated from our CD player. A few in the audience clapped a little as Geoffrey strummed along. My voice cracked as I began to croon to the music. Waving my hair in front of my face, I acted out the part of a depressed and slightly paranoid rock star. The audience was lulled and clapped politely. Immediately after the last chord, Geoffrey started an upbeat and jiving riff on his guitar. Then the beat slowed, and I began to sing, “Rape Me.” The crowd of students and administrators gasped and one of RAs whispered to Dr. Kovak; they hadn’t expected such controversial lyrics and it looked like they might unplug us. The beat continued in a cycle of slow riffs and upbeat solos, building to a pinnacle of noise. Suddenly, Geoffrey produced a violent explosion of discordant guitar ‘music.’

I was screaming now, my voice matching the pace of my surging hair. In time to Geoffrey’s crescendo, I dancing forward and did a spin then jumped to the front of the stage where I head-banged violently. Geoffrey broke into the climax of the song and this sent me into a wavering frenzy. I kicked our cereal box structure into the audience. Many of the spectator’s mouths were agape, and there were several screams. This little preppy girl named Monica yelled, “God, damn you.” I screamed, “Rape me” and shuffled from the left to the right side of the stage kicking into the vowels and consonants. Corn, Bran, Wheat, and Rice filled the air as boxes of cereal exploded. One box hit an administrator in the head, covering him in sticky yellow Corn Pops; several students skillfully dodged consumable projectiles. I gave one final thrust with my foot and destroyed the A. The crowd was “in Ahh.” The last blow sent a few boxes flying into an overhang on the ceiling. Unfortunately, this last kick also broke the straps on one of my flip-flops and it flew into an unexpected spectator’s lap. The audience burst into

laughter at that and began to applaud. Our cereal killing was successful.

As we bowed, one of the resident assistants, a large woman named Priscilla, jumped on stage. “You had no right to play that song,” she yelled at us over the cheers. “I never gave you a set list so I didn’t break from plans,” I said. She coughed, obviously couldn’t think of anything to say, and walked off stage. As we took our seats in the audience, Dr. Kovak and the computer teacher Dr. Mason congratulated Geoffrey and me for giving a rousing performance. All was well, barely.

It’s amazing how much enjoyment I made out of a few simple boxes. I contemplate the air between the cereal on my spoon and me, and listen to the crackle in my mouth. “Glup.” A bit of orange juice washes away the noise. After depositing my tray on the conveyer in the back of the room, I slip back to the cafeteria line. While the student worker looks the other way I snatch a box of Raisin Bran from the stack and quickly place it into my Eastpack.

My Short Fiction: English 464

Why I Wear Gloves When I Get Out My Lawnmower from the Crawl Space

Baer William Bradford

“Oh my Lord. There’s so many of them.”

Through the sprawling mass of squirming bodies I could barely hear my wife call back, “So many of what.”

“Crickets.”

“Spiders!!!”

“No crickets. Camel-back-crickets.”

“So what.”

“They’re gross.”

I had since escaped my cricket tomb where I had been scouting out a place to store the lawnmower. I crept slowly through our front door.

“But they can’t . . . aaah! God damnit, you scared the bejesus out of me, get your fingers out of my hair.”

Grabbing her from behind I clasped her close to me and whispered into her ear, “See, anything is creepy if it is crawling on you.”

“You’re only creepy if I think you’re a spider.”

“Ack,” my voice echoed around the tub and out into the unfurnished living room.

“What is it?”

“Crickets, two in the tub, in the house, maybe they came from the crawl space.”

“Well they warned us about the possibility of crickets.”

“Don’t worry I’ll take care of them.”

“DON’T you dare kill them.”

“Why the hell NOT,” I began to lose my balance as one of the crickets jumped towards my foot. Cleaning the bathroom didn’t seem like it should be so perilous.

“They can’t hurt you.”

“Well then I’m flushing them down the drain, we need to clear out the pipes in the tub anyway.”

“That’s fine, as long as you don’t kill them.”

I spent the next three minutes trying to get the two crickets down the drain. Of course if you get a bug down the drain it is likely to crawl back up again, but I figured since their legs are so bowed they wouldn’t be able to crawl up vertical surfaces very well. But they sure hang on to horizontal surfaces mighty tight. Every time I thought I had one of them down they would clasp the ring of the drain and the next swirl of water would throw one of them back into the splash. Once they were gone I continued fixing up the grout, but kept glancing towards the drain in the tub, and the one in the sink as well. You never know about bugs.

“God damnit.”

“What!”

“Another fucking cricket.”

“What is it with you and crickets?”

“Not just crickets, Camel-back-crickets.”

“I can’t believe you drowned those two yesterday, I still swear I heard you say you were going to push them down the drain.”

“I would have had to touch them to push them, like I would touch them. They are so creepy looking. Like mutated land shrimp or something.”

My wife giggles then says, “But they can’t even bite, how can you pick up a spider and take it outside, yet turn tail at a cricket?”

“Well, crickets can jump at you for one thing, for another I never pick up spiders with my bare hands, and black crickets don’t bother me in the least, it is just these perversions of nature that bounce around our house that I can’t stand. Damn, come look at this thing, they can’t even jump right, they are top heavy for God’s sake. Here, why don’t you come escort our bouncing friend outside Mrs. Cricket Pacifist?”

“Hell no, I’m not getting up just to get rid of a cricket.”

“Fine then I’m crushing it.”

Why I Wear Gloves When I Get Out My Lawnmower from the Crawl Space

“No, just take it outside okay.”

“I bet he will bring all his little hunchback friends back here to feast on our luscious crumbs and soon we will have our own little cricket hovel like that horrible ceiling-o-cricket in the crawl space.”

“Oh stop being so melodramatic and just take the dame thing outside.”

I considered breaking one or two of it’s legs as I captured it under a cup, but my own pacifism got the best of me and I just escorted the little bastard outside unharmed, with a violent toss though.

“Was that so hard.”

“I’d like to see you do that with a spider.”

“That’s what you are for, and you know if I had seen the cricket I would have taken it out myself, you’ve seen me do it.”

“I know, I just, ack, they are so creepy.”

“You’ll get used to them.”

“That’s a horrible thought, I hope there are never so many in here that I ‘get used to them.’”

“Aaaah!”

My wife came rushing out of the bathroom sopping wet soap suds running down her sides.

“What is it, are you okay?”

“There’s a fricking cricket in my grape nuts box.”

“Eww, that IS gross.”

“I can’t take this anymore honey.”

“Okay, okay, you can spray around the kitchen, but just the kitchen.”

“Yeah like I would spray anywhere else with our allergies.” I throw the rest of the grape nuts in the trash not even venturing to guess if there are cricket eggs in them.

Of course the long term consequence of just spraying the kitchen is that they migrated to the living room where they took up under my computer table, then when I sprayed there they joined their friends in the bathroom. I sprayed there and didn’t let on that I knew why my wife and I had constant headaches. They then moved to the guest bedroom, they were harder to get rid of there because we stored a lot of boxes there, but soon they had done the inevitable. They took up residence in OUR

bedroom. Now I couldn't spray there, my sinuses could never stand that. So after a week or two of wadding through creepies my wife warmed up to the idea of crushing crickets, and eventually our new Gestapo methods must have convinced them that the house isn't a safe place because they left. But now every time I pull out my lawnmower I have to wear gloves, since it is covered in those little pinto beans on stilts.

Baer William Bradford

Sour Candy

I keep wanting to stand up and get a breath of fresh air. Except there isn't any fresh air out side because everyone goes out side to smoke ever since McDonald's stopped allowing people to light up inside. So I just sit here and watch Kristi give Chris goggley eyes while I try not to do the same to Valley."

"You want any dessert Valley?"

"No that's okay. How about you Chris, Kristi?"

"No thanks," says Chris. The question rolls right over Kristi.

"How 'bout we head up to the movies then?"

Without even waiting for an answer I stand up and wait behind Valley. But Valley turns towards Chris and takes his hand as she gets out of her seat. Kristi and I exchange glances as Valley and Chris head out the door.

"I thought she was your girl Alan."

"Shuddup Kristi."

"I thought you said, "Chris seems to like you Kristi."

"Kristi, if you weren't my little sister I would leave you here. Come on let's follow them."

We hurry out the door, "Cough, cough." In unison our sinuses flare up from the smoke cloud to which Chris is adding.

"I thought you said you stopped Chris," said Valley.

"I did, and after I am done with this cigarette I'll quite again, until the next one."

I give Kristi a smile, she knows I'm glad Chris isn't interested in her, despite his charm, being President of the Drama Club and all, he is rough around the edges. At least too rough for my sister.

As we walk up the hill to the dollar theatre I try to stand next to Valley but she is leaning decidedly towards Chris, and doesn't respond to me once until we are in the commons area of the dollar theatre and I ask everyone what movie we should see.

"I want to see [plug in name of romantic drama released in '96-'97 that would be in second run theatres summer '97]," squealed my sister.

"How about [plug in name of Quentin T. or Kevin Smithish film . . .]," said Valley. She says this in a way that makes me think she is either trying to out do my sister with a more adult choice of movie, or empresses Chris. Either way it has nothing to do with me.

"Yeah that sounds good," said Chris, who didn't seem to mind Valley's flirting at McD's. I'm waiting for the right time to take Chris aside and letting him know he is stepping over the line.

"I've seen both of those."

"Oh," Chris's eyes slumped a little, "well what haven't we all seen."

This is what I hate worst about going to the dollar theatre, everyone has already seen one or more of the films because everyone has different tastes. So it took us nearly fifteen minutes to decide that the only film that three of us hadn't seen was *The Saint*, and while Valley had seen it she didn't care because Val Kilmer was in it. So I ended my three-year strike against the actor who ruined the Batman franchise.

The next problem facing us isn't buying tickets, Chris easily took care of what could have been the start of a large argument by sveltely paying the four dollars for all of us, no it is how we are going to seat ourselves in the theatre. The problem isn't just who sits near who, no this is an x and y coordinate problem. But eventually my battleship is sunk and I we sit on the third row, our necks craning, Valley beside me, Chris to her right and my poor sister, forever the shunned, on the end of the aisle at his right.

After sleeping through the first fifteen minutes I wake up to the horrible vision of Val Kilmer's twenty-foot head. Nearly screaming I bolt aright and then see something even worse. Valley holding Chris's hand. Now this wouldn't be a problem if I hadn't already tried the same thing at the beginning of the movie. I storm out of the room nearly knocking my sister into the aisle as I cram past the three of them.

If I haven't already lost Valley to Chris then this is the time to act. We had hurried in to our seats once Chris got the tickets because our fifteen minute discussion on the finer points of modern second run movies left us with little time to find our seats. So knowing that Valley loves 'Sour Patch Kids' pluck down the ridiculous \$2.50 a buy a pack. The few times Valley and I have spent together hanging out around town this summer she has always had a pack of SPK's on hand, I see it as *our* candy.

To make them wonder where I am I sit outside for about ten minutes then I walk into the darkened auditorium, lighten only by Val Kilmer's twenty food torso and the runway lights that line the aisle. I take my seat and ignore the pleas of my friends as they ask me what is wrong. They quit asking when several people holler shut up.

Hoping to out do Chris on the smoothness scale with a flick of my wrist I hand the candy to Valley.

"Thank you, here Chris you want some?"

Horrified, I stare by the light of Val Kilmer's fake mustache as Valley distributes half of my offering to Chris, and a few to Kristi.

"You want any Alan?"

I pretend to be asleep again.

Baer William Bradford

Tight

Jordan carefully nudged the pancake to test its consistency. Determining that it was stiff enough he flipped it and the one next to it. As he got to the third Marla walked into the kitchen and attempted to thread her way past Jordan to the one-foot by three-foot area between him and the sink.

She bumped his arm and the third pancake ended up on the stove where it oozed its way down under the eye. Jordan quickly flipped off the burner but it was too late. Within twenty seconds the entire apartment was full of a choking charred smell and the First Alert had gone off. He took it down and waved it around to make its piercing tone stop, while waving his hands in front of him to clear up the fumes. The alarm slipped out of his hand and knocked Marla in the shoulder before plunging into the dingy sink full of oil and soapy dishes.

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“Get your dick out of my face,” Marla snipped.

“Groan.” Jordan had just completed an incredible man feat by peeing, turning around without dripping on the rug and grabbing a comb from the sink. But Marla was sitting in the bathtub and as she so sternly pointed out his dick was indeed swinging right over her head.

Jordan pivoted back to the toilet to get out of Marla’s personal space. Three droplets of amber liquid flung from his penis as it swung out. They popped several bubbles in the bath then impacted and quickly diffused into the water, losing their yellow hue.

Marla made that noise. The one she made when she was too mad to scream his name. It was a mixture of “Arghh.” “Ahhhh.” and “Grrr.” This noise was usually followed by “Fuck you.” But this it was followed by a large splash. Marla’s leg swung in a brilliant arc and Jordan was covered in water.

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Jordan attempted to navigate the strewn piles of clothes in the bedroom as he made his way to the bed. He couldn’t turn the light on because he would wake Marla, and he couldn’t get Marla to turn on the bedside light because . . . he would wake Marla. So he took slow stutter steps until he was half

way to the bed. Then the cat burst out from under it and ran right under his foot.

“Damned, creature.”

He tumbled forward, but was closer than he thought, so half his body fell across the bed. His stomach rammed the side of the mattress and he gasped as he drug himself between the sheets.

She coughed, “God it stinks in here, you okay pancake boy?”

“Uh, yeah, I’m fine, hold it you’re awake?”

“I am now.”

“Oh. Sorry for waking you baby. You know, we need a bigger apartment.”

“No, we need a house.”

“We can’t afford to even rent a house.”

“Life sucks,” Marla sighed.

“Well, that’s pretty much it yep, life sucks. At least until I get out of college and get a real job.”

“It’ll suck then too. We’ll just have a larger place to trip on things and bump into each other.

Goodnight.”

“I love you.”

“Me too.”

“You love you too.”

“Yeah, I do, but I love you too, too.” Marla snickers.

Jordan rolls over, nudges the demon cat off the bed and tries to fall asleep over the noise of a train passing by less than a football field away from their window.

Baer William Bradford

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Baer William Bradford

Story #1 for English 463

Sunday, January 23, 2000

Talking with the Wounded

“The last person I remember talking to was Big Fred. My friends and I had decided we had enough of his tough stuff so we’re going to back that bully to the back of the bus, because, you know, it was time for him to be scared.”

“Yeah Billy I understand.”

“Call me Will, ‘k?”

“Okay, Willy.”

“Anyways he stands up to push me to the back of the bus like usual and I stand my ground. My friends John and Jose stand up behind me, like we planned. For a second I didn’t think they were going to stand up, I started to sweat, hell even if they hadn’t stood up my hands would have been soaking.”

“How long had Freddie been messing with you all.”

“Since middle-school I guess. That doesn’t sound like much, but we were all juniors, none of us had cars, we were being bussed into the magnet school. Never understood how Fred managed to be going there too. We always figured his mom slept with the principal or something. Hee, hee. But doesn’t matter now.”

“Yes it does, everything matters, at least everything on your mind. Everything we talk about here on this show is all that matters, the only thing that anyone will hear. So everything you say matters to my listeners. We’ll, did he back off Willy?”

“No, he stood his ground like I figured he would. Damn, bastard. Umm, I’m sorry I didn’t mean to curse on air.”

“That’s okay, I’m sure no one cares anymore Willy. But, if it makes you feel better, then you can hold your tongue if you want. Whatever makes you feel most comfortable.”

“Thank you Conrad. Anyways I started to sit down and Fred grabbed my shoulder and said, “What you think you’re doing?” and I shrugged him off and kept sitting down while John and Jose grabbed Fred and pushed him back to his seat, just like we planned. It was all going well, then I saw a

flash, for some reason I crouched under the seat and it is good I did because in just a few seconds the bus flipped. Everyone who was standing got crushed when we rolled down the side of the embankment we were on, everyone including Fred, John and Jose. A couple of people sitting down managed to get loose and scabble out of the bus, but then there was a second flash and a low rumble. I only saw the flash through my closed eyes, I was so frightened I wasn't going anywhere."

"How long did you stay curled up like that."

"About a half an hour, cause after a few minutes I had figured out what was going on."

"Yeah, it became kind of obvious."

"Well luckily we were just subject to heat and wind, so while most of my friends died, those of us who stayed in the bus survived, and there wasn't much fallout here. Yet. So I managed to get to this old fallout area at the town square, I didn't even take notice what building it was, just ran in and went downstairs. It is surprising that they still had this much stuff ready."

"The cold war never really ended, at least that is my theory Willy."

"Sounds about right Conrad, sir."

"So they had an old CB radio down there?"

"No sir, this thing is high tech, it has more knobs buttons and switches than on the front of a high end receiver. But all I know how to do is just change frequencies and switch it off and on. Still, it wasn't too hard to find you. So, you are transmitting this out from your end over to AM?"

"Yes, and I guess that makes a good lead into to give the station ID. Not that I have to but I will out of habit and to let people know what they are listening too.

"In case you have just joined us on WWGG 1042 AM my name is Conrad Walker and we're talking to survivors of Third World War. Right now we are talking to Willy. He was just recounting his last experiences with someone, well with anyone alive. If you want to get a hold of me you can try calling at 444-802-7575, but the chances of that working seem slim. Better yet you can reach me on citizens band radio at channel 21 or ham radio frequency 142.321."

"Willy, you there?"

"Yes sir."

"I'm going to search check and see if anyone is on any other frequencies, if anyone comes to our

Talking with the Wounded

frequency keep them on here, and tell them I would love for them to join us on the air. Ok?”

“Sounds good sir. Talk to you again soon.”

“Of course.

“We would go to commercial break, but something tells me that our sponsors won’t mind if I skip that. Instead, to help break the monotony that is my voice I will play a few songs from the second of five albums produced by my favorite band, Third Eye Blind, one must assume we won’t be graced by any new tunes from them anytime soon. Here they are with “Wounded” from their 1999 release Blue.”



Baer William Bradford

Thursday, May 04, 2000

Talking with the Wounded

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“. . . the last person I remember talking to was Big Fred. My friends and I had decided we'd had enough of his tough stuff so we were going to back that bully to the back of the bus, because, you know, it was time for him to be scared.”

“Yes Billy, I understand and I am sure my listeners do too.”

“Call me Will, ‘k?”

“Okay, Willy.”

“Anyways, he stands up to push me to the back of the bus like usual and I stand my ground. My friends John and Jose stand up behind me, like we planned. For a second I didn't think they were going to stand up, I started to sweat; hell even if they hadn't stood up my hands would have been soaking.”

“How long had Freddie been messing with you all?”

“Since middle-school I guess. That doesn't sound like much, but we were all juniors, none of us had cars we were being bussed into the magnet school. Never understood how Fred managed to be there too. We always figured his mom slept with the principal or something. Hee, hee. But doesn't matter now.”

“Yes it does, everything matters, at least everything on your mind. Everything we talk about here on this show is all that matters, the only thing that anyone will hear. So everything you say matters to my listeners. Well, did Freddie back off?”

“No, he stood his ground like I figured he would. Damn bastard. Umm, I'm sorry I didn't mean to curse on air.”

“That is okay, I am sure no one cares anymore Willy. But if it makes you feel better, then you can hold your tongue if you want. Whatever makes you feel most comfortable.”

“Thank you Conrad. Anyways, I started to sit down and Fred grabbed my shoulder and said, ‘What you think you're doing?’ and I shrugged him off and kept sitting down while John and Jose grabbed Fred and pushed him back to his seat, just like we planned. It was all going well, then I saw a

flash. For some reason I crawled under the seat and it was a damn good thing I did because in just a few seconds the bus flipped. Everyone who was standing got crushed when we rolled down the side of the embankment we were on, including Fred, John and Jose. A couple of people sitting down managed to get loose and scramble out of the bus, but then there was a second flash and a low rumble. I only saw the flash through my closed eyes, I was so frightened I wasn't going anywhere."

"How long did you stay curled up like that."

"About a half an hour, cause after a few minutes I had figured out what was going on."

"Yeah, it became kind of obvious."

"Well, luckily we were just subject to heat and wind, so while most of my friends died, those of us who stayed in the bus survived and there wasn't much fallout here. Yet. I pulled myself out of the bus and dragged myself up the embankment, avoiding the burning brush. I headed towards town because I'd seen these old fallout shelters when I was a kid. The streets and sidewalks were empty when I got there except for a few burning cars and a dog that lay on its side. I caught a glimpse of the yellow shelter sign; I didn't even notice what building it was on, just ran in and went downstairs. It's surprising that they still had this much stuff ready an emergency."

"The cold war never really ended, at least that is my theory Willy."

"Sounds about right, Conrad, sir."

"So they had an old CB radio down there?"

"No sir, this thing is high tech, it has more knobs, buttons and switches than the front of a high end receiver. But all I know how to do is just change frequencies and switch it off and on. Still, it wasn't too hard to find you. Are you transmitting this out from your end over to AM or something; I don't have a regular radio to listen to you on?"

"Yes, and I guess that makes a good lead in to give the station ID. Not that I have to, but I will out of habit, just to let people know what they are listening too.

"In case you have just joined us on WWGG 1042 AM, my name is Conrad Walker, and we are talking to survivors of the Third World War. Right now we are talking to Willy. He was just recounting his last experiences with someone, well, with anyone alive. If you want to get a hold of me, you can try calling at 444-802-7575, but the chances of that working seem slim. Better yet you can reach me on

citizens band radio at channel 21 or ham radio frequency 142.321.”

“Willy, you there?”

“Yes sir.”

“I am going to check and see if anyone is on any other frequencies, if anyone comes to our frequency keep them on here, and tell them I would love for them to join us on the air. Ok?”

“Sounds good sir. Talk to you again soon.”

“Of course.”

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