
Christ School Journal of Writing and Art

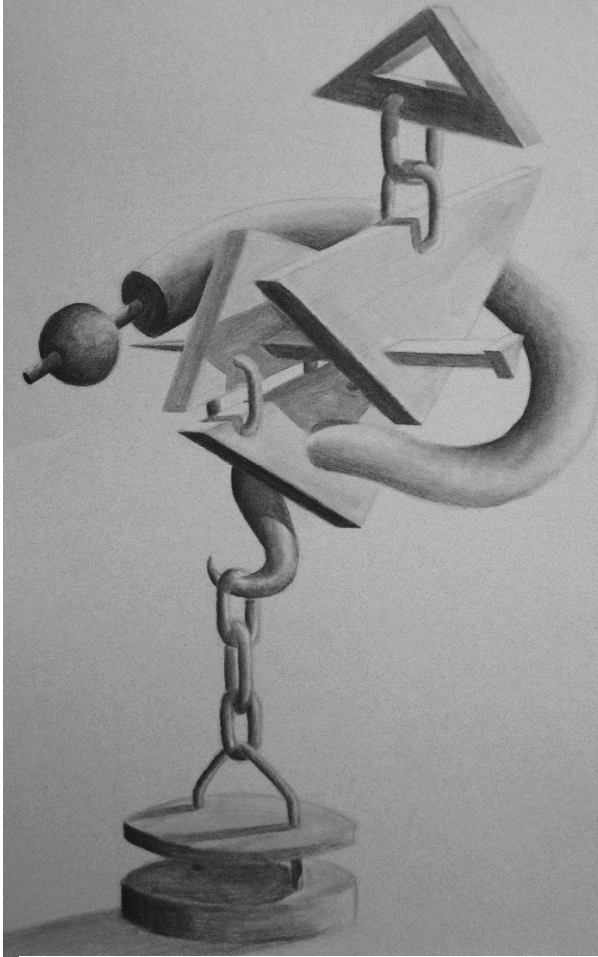


2011-2012

STRUCTURE

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Cover Photo by Will Strothe



ANCHOR charcoal drawing by Evan Johnson

Editor's Note: The writing and artwork in this book were done independently. The writing is not intended to describe the art, nor the art to illustrate the writing. We hope you will simply enjoy both.

Special thanks to all the students who submitted their own work, and to Ms. Dillon, Mr. Moroz, and Mr. John who encouraged and collected work from students in their classes.

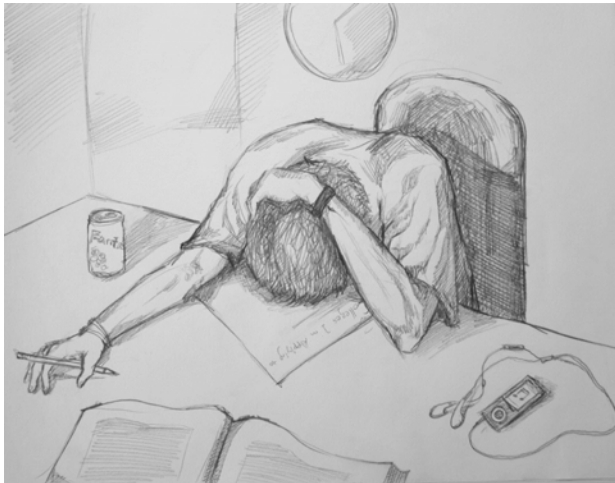
WRITING

Conner Allison	
<i>A Firm Tree Does Not Fear the Storm</i>	36
Davey Arroyo III	
<i>The Daring Mission</i>	62
Matthew A. Betts	
<i>Death of "der König Heinrich"</i> .	64
Noah Downman	
<i>Yerik</i>	56
David Duplechin	
<i>The Greatest Football Player in the World: Alejandro David</i> . .	26
Chike Ekwonu	
<i>Why the Turtle Has a Shell</i> . . .	40
<i>My Savior, the Moon</i>	35
Jack Fleming	
<i>"Love Thyself"</i>	50
Sam Grabenstein	
<i>Jets and Jealousy</i>	42
Quincy Grant	
<i>So Far Gone</i>	24
Griffin Groh	
<i>Off the Trail</i>	8
Cooper Henkel	
<i>Bon Hiver</i>	17
<i>walls</i>	35
<i>sperrys</i>	39
<i>sperrys II</i>	39
<i>embroidery</i>	45
<i>cellphone</i>	45
<i>l.a.</i>	53
<i>crazypants</i>	67
Mark Humble	
<i>Haiku</i>	5
Parker Hyland	
<i>The Lost Brick</i>	68
Graham Lail	
<i>The Hitchhiker</i>	54
Hayes Laporte	
<i>Sailing Away</i>	18

Kiffen Loomis	
<i>Malevolence and Love</i>	46
Matthew Lowe	
<i>The Day She Sank</i>	6
Jennings Mulholen	
<i>Number Five</i>	20
Reid Motter	
<i>What Goes Around</i>	
<i>Comes Around</i>	58
Michael Ray	
<i>Haiku</i>	5
Sam Sinsky	
<i>Deadly Operation.</i>	12
Andrew Stevenson	
<i>The Secret of Icarus</i>	3
Will Strothe	
<i>I Swallowed My Pen</i>	70
Conor Stuart-Roe	
<i>The Passings of the Crown.</i> . . .	32
Julian Taylor	
<i>The Redemption of a Lifetime</i> . .	60

LATE NIGHT STUDY

pencil drawing by Chandler Ding



ARTWORK

David Benitez	
<i>Alone</i>	23
Chandler Ding	
<i>Late Night Study</i>	2
<i>Bicycle</i>	16
<i>David</i>	17
<i>Practice Shot.</i>	25
<i>Warrior</i>	31
<i>Tree</i>	37
<i>City</i>	53
<i>Iron Horse</i>	54
<i>Late Night Study</i>	2
Sam Grabenstein	
<i>Stripes</i>	60
Alex Hudak	
<i>Wolf</i>	11
<i>King of Beasts.</i>	41
<i>Cat</i>	48
Evan Johnson	
<i>Anchor</i>	1
Vincent Li	
<i>Bamboo</i>	63
Thomas Ritter	
<i>Between the Seasons.</i>	5
<i>Joker King</i>	45
Banks Simmons	
<i>Afterroom</i>	35
Will Strothe	
<i>Silhouette</i>	19
<i>Racerock Lighthouse</i>	39
<i>Footprint</i>	51
<i>Worn Flag</i>	68
<i>Beach.</i>	70
Jonathan Yung	
<i>Sailing</i>	6
<i>Castle</i>	33
<i>Jet</i>	44
<i>Earphones</i>	67

The Secret of Icarus

by Andrew Stevenson

It was a funny thought. It was a thought that came to me on the eve of the Machina New Year. The next year was full of promise, or at least that's what The Authority would have us think. The next year was always full of promise. Strange, it reminded me of the days of my youth when my father would always tell me that his team would be better next year. The thought danced in my head, weaving around algebra and formulas, between madness and revolution. If The Authority ever discovered this thought, they would surely have me executed or converted. The little companion robot I built while in exile came up to me. I never built it to be a free thinker, but I must have slipped somewhere along the way. It asked me questions frequently, but none were as terrifying as this.

"Sir, why are we here?"

My pale skin seemed to fade to translucent levels as the text flashed across the screen, and my eyes grew wide with fear. This little robot had been my only friend for 20 damn years, and this was the first time it ever showed any personal connection. I understood this machine; it would not leave until I answered it.

"It all started 40 years ago, before the Machina Revolution..."

"Dr. Gaines, are you alright?" she asked as I stared off into space, pondering about all sorts of things. After assuring her I was, my secretary left my lab and I began to go back to work on a new prototype I was building. After tinkering with only a few parts for several hours, I had finally finished the prototype. I named it Icarus. The machine was supposed to be the first sentient machine, one that would be self aware, with a full range of emotions, and just as smart as any scientist. Up until that very point, machines had simply been workhorses, only used as labor forces and, for the super-rich, personal assistants. Yet none were aware of what they were. As I fin-

"Sir, was Icarus my father?"

"Don't interrupt."

As I finished the final tweaks on Icarus through the course of roughly a month, I grew distant from my colleagues. Some even began to think I was losing my sanity. In retrospect, I can see why. I was pale and haggard, and even though I was only 29 at the time, I looked as haggard as a sea captain. I had begun to become obsessed with Icarus, and many of my team members left the project, and eventually funding ceased. I thought I would prove them wrong in a month's time, when I would reveal Icarus to the world. I thought so many things back then...

The day of the reveal came, and I was bright-eyed and eager to show the world my creation. I got up on stage after shaking a few hands, and with great confidence told the crowd that what they saw would change the way we think of machines forever. Just as I was finishing my speech, I felt a rumble beneath my feet. I looked down to see if anything was wrong. All I can remember from there is a loud bang, a destroyed theater, and a shattered dream. People tell me that a rival corporation planted a bomb in the theater and detonated it as I revealed Icarus. The same corporation accused me of being a terrorist, but they could not afford the risk of putting me in prison. Instead, the court was bribed into sending me into exile. I was to gather all my machines along with one suitcase before getting on a helicopter destined for the Isle of Man.

"People still lived on islands then?"

"Yes, the first Sky-City had not been built then."

The Isle of Man was a comfortable little island, with basic services provided to me. Due to pollution, most of the island had been abandoned in favor of The Scottish Republic, and those that remained had degraded into mere savages. The Earth had been unified into the Omnistate, and almost every piece of land was under its government. The Omnistate came after the 60-Year War, and managed to unify the world after the collapse of the environment. The Isle of Man was one of the few places that was left intact after the nuclear bombs, and at first, many took refuge there. That all changed after the Omnistate. Cold and cruel, the government used some of the earliest androids to rid the island of unneeded population, leaving those who could hide to fend for themselves.

I stayed in a castle on a hill, cold and alone, save for my mechanical companion. In my isolation, I had no knowledge of the world around me, so I was left to think and build, day after day. The thoughts I had were often cluttered by the cobwebs of my mind, but one in particular shone through my mental murk, grasping for attention and further exploration.

Are we human anymore?

The thought sat there, patient, yet eager. Waiting for a response. I knew I could not confront this. Not yet. There was still work to be done. Icarus, the machine set to save the world, ultimately destroyed it. After the explosion on the reveal day, news came in that Iran had threatened to launch nuclear arms on the West. They made good on their promise, and the world was left in tatters, questions looming in the air. What was the cause of this? How did they acquire the firepower? How did-

"Sir!"

Agitated, I turned around quickly. Instead of my usual mechanical companion, I was greeted by cold steel and red eyes.

"COME WITH US."

The Authority was here. They knew, of course they knew! I had to run. Palms sweating, I grabbed my notes and jumped through the window. I would never let them discover my secret. I would never let them really know why Icarus was created. The Authority was after me, and I had two options: prison or death.

I ran quickly, leaping over the broken wasteland and burnt towns. Nervous and tired, I stopped in a small house, attempting to rest. I could hear helicopters, their sharp blades hovering overhead, their lights hunting me down. I ran further, pressing ever onwards, my feet pounding as fast as my heart. They couldn't know. The world wasn't ready.

Icarus was meant to replace mankind.

He was meant to have all of our human qualities, all of our humanity, without the flaws.

He was supposed to lead the charge into a new age of prosperity and knowledge.

But the world wasn't ready. They still aren't.

As I ran, I could hear the sounds of the acidic waters pounding against the scarred cliffside, raging and frothing. The Authority was right behind me, ready to arrest me. As I approached the edge of the cliff, the thought from my journal answered itself.

We're human for as long as we want to be.

"STOP RIGHT THERE."

I was at the edge of the cliff, my back against the wall of air. My whole life, I had worked to make a better human, and this was my fate. I stood there for several minutes, looking at my own reflection in the cold breastplate of the robots. My black hair had become shaggy, and I was ghastly pale. My thin frame seemed ready to collapse on itself.

Icarus was my son.

I was supposed to be the leader of the new age.

I jumped.

Haiku

Apples hanging on
Continuously waiting. . .

Finally F
A
L
L
I
N
G.

by Mark Humble

Haiku

A waterfall runs
Beautifully glistening
Each and every day.

by Michael Ray



BETWEEN THE SEASONS scratchboard drawing by Thomas Ritter

The Day She Sank

by Matthew Lowe

That New Year's morning, cold and rainy, Captain Edward Smith, virtually just out of captain school with less than 500 hours behind the wheel of a boat, hoped to start a lifetime career piloting large ships in and out of harbors and ports. Edward was well educated, his girlfriend Sarah was over at his house and they were taking a lazy day off on their Saturday because they had been working their Saturdays for the last three weeks. As they lay on Edward's plush leather couch cuddling and listening to the radio newscaster: "It's January 1st and what a great month it is. News just in about the great RMS Titanic and its planned launch in mid April. The owners are claiming that it is unsinkable and has been built to the highest standards. Until next time folks we shall see how the RMS Titanic fares against the unwilling seas."

"Pretty crazy how they can claim something so absurd, huh Ed?" said Sarah. "Yes, it's amazing how they think their ship can be unsinkable but let's hope they are right."

Cuddling sweetly and cozily, half asleep they switched to the classic station, relaxed and enjoyed their Saturday off. Around 4:30 pm Ed got an urgent telegram from J.P. Morgan, the owner of the Titanic. The message read:

Dear Edward John Smith,

It has come to my attention that we are still short a captain for our newest addition to the fleet. The RMS Titanic as you know is nearing completion and should be done in several months. The captain of this ship must be trained enough to know how to captain a ship, but adaptable and flexible enough to contour to the ship's state of the art technologies. Please come by my office on January 2nd around 1:00 pm so we may discuss this in more detail. I assure you the pay for your acceptance will be handsomely and amply rewarding.

Sincerely,

J. P. Morgan

Into his stomach, his heart went filled with the burning desire to take the position as he read the telegram. He felt mixed feelings because he knew the seriousness of the offer, but also the joy of this offer. What wonderful things this could bring him! But also how risky and dangerous it could be.

"Hey Sarah, what would you think if I was the Captain of the Titanic?"

"Well, I would have to be your first mate and we could sail all over the world together!" She said very jokingly, not realizing his seriousness.

"J. P. Morgan just sent me an urgent message asking me, and the pay would be great."

"Wow, Ed, I didn't know you were serious. What do you think? Do you want to do it?"

"It's been my dream ever since I was a young boy and it would give me a chance to get my name out there and build my reputation."



SAILING pencil drawing by Jonathan Yung

“Hey, Hun, I’m all for what you want to pursue in life.”

“Thanks.”

“I think its time for me to head home. And Ed...”

“Yes?”

“...Think hard about this decision and remember, no matter what your decision is I will always be supporting you.”

“Thanks, Sarah. Good night.”

As Edward went to sleep he thought long and hard about this offer. What’s to lose? What are the risks? If he did this it would dramatically increase his popularity and would get him instant access to future jobs and other offers like this. Slowly he dozed off and didn’t wake up until 10:30 the next morning. He arrived at Mr. Morgan’s office at 1:00 pm and they began quickly reviewing what this job would entail, the maiden voyage route, crew, leadership and everything else he needed to know about the RMS Titanic along with all of its many state of the art technologies. The captain visited the Titanic many times to go over the ship’s utilities and familiarize himself with his future job to the day the Titanic was set to sail.

Two months later Captain Edward was fully prepped and ready to sail.

“Are you ready, captain?” said the first mate.

“Let’s start the crew shoveling coal. It takes a while for her to heat up.”

April 10, 12:30 pm, the RMS Titanic left the dock with Captain Edward Smith at the wheel.

“Everything is going well, captain! The engines are maintaining proper temperature.”

“Good, and make sure it stays that way.”

Icebergs, the large underwater death traps, were reported outside the port of Newfoundland.

“Captain! The crew up in the crow’s-nest said they spotted icebergs!”

“Don’t worry. They are probably just hallucinating,” the captain said, not wanting to accept the fact that he was in trouble. As hours passed, things seemed to be going downhill.

“Captain the crow’s-nest is saying we are heading straight for an iceberg. We must deviate from our original course to avoid the berg!”

“If they are certain there is an iceberg than we shall avoid it as much as possible but its not going to be easy and there is the possibility of getting lost if we deviate too much.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Captain, the boiler rooms is saying the two main engines are beginning to overheat!”

“Well, fix it! We are in an iceberg field and we can’t tackle this with just the turbine!”

There was nothing that could have been done more as the Titanic barreled towards the iceberg.

“Captain, we are going to hit it!”

“There is nothing more we can do. The ship can’t turn fast enough. Prepare the crew and passengers to board the life boats.”

“Yes, sir.”

As the nearly 300,000 ton iceberg slashed a gaping hole in the steel hull, some passengers boarded the life boats while others were certain the Titanic could stay afloat until the nearest boat that was in range of the S.O.S. calls could come and save them. Captain Smith went down with his ship following the marine tradition. Nearly 1,500 people died that night and the remains of the ship lie more than 6,500 feet below the surface in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. The boat that came to rescue them could only save 800 of the 2300 passengers.

Off the Trail

by Griffin Groh

“Can anything else go wrong?” Norm exclaimed as he rolled out of bed, thirty minutes after the bus that was supposed to take both he and his friend Stewart had departed. He fumbled in the darkness, pulling on his hiking gear, sloppily brushed his teeth, and splashed lukewarm water on his unshaven face.

In the mirror, he caught a sight of his own face. His black hair stuck up over his forehead and there were frown lines between his eyebrows. A decent amount of stubble still remained on his face. Frowning, he reflected on how angry his friend Stewart would be because they had missed their bus.

Minutes later, Norm arrived in the lobby, dressed in his hiking apparel. His friend Stewart, standing at the entrance, glanced at his watch in exasperation.

Stewart had been Norm’s best friend as long as he could remember. At almost all times, a smirk was on his face as if he found everything in life amusing. His blonde hair, long and shaggy, and his peeling nose gave him the appearance of a surfer.

“Dang man, where the hell have you been? We just missed the bus! Good job, idiot!” Stewart exclaimed.

“Sorry... I didn't hear my alarm. Slept right through it. Did we really miss our bus to the Grand Tetons?” Norm replied hastily.

Stewart glanced at Norm with a look of anger, “Yeah, but I did manage to get a personal taxi to the park. What do you think I've been doing since 9:00? I also got a park ranger since we are no longer with our group. Seems like a waste of money to me though.”

Satisfied, Norm glances at the main clock in the lobby. “Any idea about what time they are going to show up?” Norm added hastily.

“At 9:45, just a few minutes from now,” said Stewart.

Minutes later, both Stewart and Norm headed out the door. On their way out, a hotel staff called out, “Mr. Pidd and Mr. Ull, is there anything else we can do for you?”

Nodding, Stewart said, “Yeah, you can clean my room,” and slammed the squeaking taxi door closed.

Grinning, Stewart and Norm exchanged looks inside the taxi. They hadn’t felt this excited since their first college road trip. They had been planning this summer trip all winter and spring.

The taxi wasn't a Checker Cab and it looked worse for wear. Inside, the door handles were missing and the windows wouldn't roll all the way up. Things only got worse when they started on the road. The cab apparently never had a set of shock absorbers installed. Both Stewart and Norm swore that their whole bodies had been shaken like a martini.

After what seemed like an eternity of torture, Stewart and Norm reached their destination, the Lake Julian trail in the Grand Teton National Park. Stepping out of the taxi, Norm noticed a park ranger looking at them enthusiastically. The grinning park ranger, tall and lean, had leathery skin from being outdoors continually.

“Y'all must be the people I'm supposed to be hiking with,” said the park ranger. “Name's Ryan Marshall. Today we'll be hiking from here toward Yellowstone. We'll hike all the way up to Grand Teton and possibly even run into some of the wildlife. As you will find out in our trip, the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone are wild and untamed.”

“Okay,” replied Norm. “So how about we get our hike started then, Ryan? I can't wait to see all the scenery around here, not to mention the animals, like moose, buffalo, and grizzly bears.” They headed along the winding trail. On the path, they noticed many tourists with cameras snapping numerous pictures of the scenery and the Grand Tetons Mountain Range itself. Screaming children zigzagged in and out of the trees while senior citizens meandered around.

Stepping into a clearing free of trees, Stewart caught his first sight of the Grand Teton range. The mountains, craggy and thousands of feet tall, looked like the teeth of a shark. At the base of them, a huge lake glistened with small particles of ice. Small glaciers and streams from higher up in the mountains fed into the lake, giving it a serene feel. On the lower sections of the mountains, vast vegetation grew; it teemed with trees such as oaks and pine. As the elevation increased, the vegetation thinned out until snow covered rocks became the landscape. At the peaks, snow glistened in the sunlight.

“Sure makes you feel small!” exclaimed Stewart.

“Got that right Stew,” said Norm, a look of amazement on his face.

They hiked for fifteen more minutes before Ryan, the park ranger, exclaimed, “If we continue to go at this pace, we'll never finish before the day is through! If you want to do everything we talked about, we're going to need to get off the trail.”

“That's right. You really have to leave the trail if you want to cover any ground,” said a voice from behind Stewart. Whirling around, Norm and Stewart saw another park ranger. “That's right,” said the park ranger, “By the way though, there are tons of moose out today. I've already seen three and I have only been out here for an hour.”

Once facing Ryan, Stewart nodded. If getting off the trail was the only way they could finish their hike, he would do it. “Let's get off the trail at the next chance we get,” said Stewart. “I would like to see all of those moose.”

Nodding in response, Ryan stepped off the trail and into a sparse part of the forest. Without turning back, he made a motion for them to follow him.

They hiked for an hour, continually staring at the Tetons Mountain range in front of them. They hiked through dense forest and around small pools of stagnant water. On occasion, they would wade through small frigid streams of thawed glacier water. Every so often, they would see a colorful preening bird and hear a high-pitched birdsong pierce the silence. As much as they hiked however, they still did not see a single moose.

Behind them, small patches of gray clouds formed, and the temperature slowly began to drop. Sensing the chill, both Norm and Stewart put on their windbreakers for warmth.

After they trudged through the next frigid stream, Stewart sat down in exhaustion. “I need to sit down,” he said, “My calves and quads are killing me. I really have to take a break.”

Norm glanced at Ryan and sat down as well. “I really hope that we see some moose soon,” Norm said crestfallen.

“Don't worry,” said Ryan, “We haven't seen any moose yet because we haven't seen any marshes or swamps. That's where you will find moose at this time of year.”

Still crestfallen, Stewart stood up and continued to trudge along. He didn't understand why moose would be found in a swamp, but the answer sufficed. Glancing at his friend Norm, he noticed that Norm desperately wanted to see a moose in the wild as well. Norm shrugged at his friend Stewart and started to walk.

Many minutes later, a large marsh, exuding a foul odor, appeared on their right. The stench of stagnant water percolated from the marsh and enveloped the entire area. Tall grasses grew in the middle of brown water and flies buzzed above. Besides the quacking of ducks and brown geese, there was very little noise. A small stream acted as a tributary to the marsh. In the middle of the tall grass, a large brown form stood, making chomping sounds and grunting.

"There's your moose," whispered Ryan. "If you want to get a better look, follow me, but be as quiet as you can. We don't want to scare the moose away."

Reaching for his camera, Norm smiled at Stewart. Slowly he began to follow Ryan in pursuit of the moose. Ryan glanced back to check that Stewart and Norm were following behind him.

As they approached the moose, the animal picked its head up and lifted up its ears, sensing something foreign in the environment. The moose had a large set of antlers with a spread of six feet.

Norm snapped a photograph of the moose right before it fled. The shutter noise from the camera broke the silence that had surrounded them.

"Something doesn't feel right," muttered Norm. "I don't think it was us that scared the moose away."

"Um...Stew, it wasn't us that scared the moose away," said Norm, pointing a shaking finger at a large grizzly bear lumbering towards them.

"Don't worry...the bear won't attack unless provoked," whispered Ryan. At the same moment, a rustling sound came from behind them. Ryan glanced back at the rustling, only to find that it was a frolicking grizzly bear cub. "Or if we get between a mother and her cub," Ryan whispered, fear in his voice.

The bear lifted its muzzle into the air and sniffed three times. Smelling the hikers scent, the grizzly bear shifted its body to face Ryan, Stewart, and Norm. When the hiker's and the grizzly's eyes met, the bear let out a loud, ominous roar.

Paralyzed by fear, Norm and Stewart started to shiver uncontrollably. Ryan slowly backed away and told Norm and Stewart, "Back up slowly and try to make yourselves appear bigger. It will decrease the possibility that we are attacked," he whispered.

Step by step Norm and Stewart retreated from the grizzly, never turning away from the bear in fear that it would attack while their backs were turned. Their guide, Ryan, allowed them to get behind him before he started to back up. Hearing a crack from behind, Ryan snapped around, his back facing the bear.

In an instant, the growling mother grizzly was on top of Ryan, tearing flesh from bone. Ryan's face was a mask of fear and pain. Within seconds, his eyes were blank and unseeing.

Seeing the gruesome spectacle, Norm and Stewart fled, knowing that they could not help Ryan now, and fearing for their lives.

They pushed their bodies to the limit, sprinting as fast as humanly possible, leaping over the shrubs in their path. They ran purely on instinct, unaware of their location and not knowing where they were fleeing. They ran in a large circle, unaware of their lack of progress.

Never had Norm or Stew been as afraid as they were now. Never before had they been on death's door.

Slowly, the adrenaline began to seep from their bodies.

Stewart stopped first, tripping over a small sapling and falling headfirst into a small pond. Seconds later, Norm collapsed from exhaustion.

Neither knew where they were, the time of day, or if they were out of harm's way.

Slowly, their heartbeats slowed and they become conscience of their surroundings once more. As they gazed into the dense forest, they saw a welcome site. Not 40 feet from them, a wooden ranger tower loomed over the forest. They ran toward the tower, yelling for help. There was no answer but still they felt relief wash over them.

Norm carefully scaled the wooden ladder leading to the station. Stewart followed behind and heard Norm exclaim. "There's a phone in here! We're saved!"

Norm picked up the phone in trembling hands and dialed 9-1-1. He prayed for a response.



WOLF scratchboard drawing by Alex Hudak

Deadly Operation

by Sam Sinsky

I was one of the most popular surgeons in Buenos Aires, with the fastest growing practice. The magazines said that it was impossible how fast I went from being a doctor of a small clinic in the outskirts of the city to being the lead surgeon for the urgent care wing of the largest hospital in Argentina. I was supposedly revolutionizing medicine with my tactics and approaches to whatever I encountered. I was on my way to the top until everything changed.

I was re-sterilizing after I stopped the bleeding in a patient's brain after a car crash when my assistant walked in. She said, "I got a call from someone wanting you to go look at someone for them."

"Call them back and say that I do not make house calls. If they want me they need to come here," I responded.

"They did not leave a number or have a caller ID. They said they need you to go to them," she replied.

"Did they at least say what is wrong with the patient?"

"No, but they did say that they will call back as soon as possible. You can ask them everything then."

Hours, days, even weeks went by and this mystery patient was always lingering in the back of my mind. I tried to forget about it by telling myself that it was a prank call, or the patient had already died and they did not feel the need to say anything, but then I was prepping for surgery when my secretary walked in, handed me a phone and said me it was the mysterious caller. "Hello," I said.

"I have a job for you," they said.

"I am sorry to tell you my schedule is full for the next few weeks, but I can give you the names of my colleagues."

"No," they said, "That won't do. We need you this week."

"I am very sorry sir but I can not ma..."

"Don't say you can't, you can and you will. Do not make us come get you."

"There is no need for threats," I replied.

"You don't want to do something you will regret. There is also a large sum of money involved. Twelve o'clock Friday, the warehouse on Main Street, see you there."

Three days later I found myself driving in my white Jeep to an abandoned building that I have never been to, to see someone I have only spoken to on the phone to do an unknown task for a reason that I was not quite sure of. Approaching the warehouse in my car, I noticed that the warehouse was completely destroyed. It looked like a tornado had hit it, all broken windows. The metal siding, faded blue and heavily rusted, was falling off and there were no cars, no people, nothing but me. It was as if I was the last human on earth. Slowly, I left my car and made my way inside the building, still no one. Standing in the middle of the warehouse, I began to think that maybe they forgot, or I messed up the dates. I started making my way back to my car when five huge men in completely black suits, earpieces, and wearing sunglasses so you could not see the whites of their eyes, walked in. They told me to put my hands on my head and kneel on the ground. They proceeded to search me and they took my phone and pager. I asked what I had done wrong and they did not say anything. Then they told me to stand up and they asked me, "Are you the doctor?"

"Yes," I said, "why did you take my phone and pager?"

“Do not worry, you will not get any service anyway. We are taking you off the grid, to your patient,” they responded. “Get in the car.”

I told them that I could follow them in my car and that all of my equipment that I needed was in there, but they did not listen. They shoved me into the back seat of a completely black Mustang with black tinted windows and navy blue cloth seats and they locked the doors as soon as they got in. After at least a half hour of speeding down the streets in the car we stopped at an empty Exxon gas station that looked like it had been out of business for years and they said, “Get out of the car.”

They took me inside and we went through the back to another car, this time a Range Rover, which was waiting for us. It seemed to have some kind of armor plating on it, and bulletproof glass. They pushed me in the back again, locked the doors, and we left in the opposite direction from where we just came. When I asked, “What was the point of that? We went way out of the way just to change cars!”

They said, “We need to be sure we are not being followed.”

“Who would be following us?” I asked.

“My boss, your future patient, has acquired many enemies throughout his life.”

“But why would they want to follow me?” I replied

“Because we are bringing you to him so if they follow you they will know where he is. You are going to help him, and in their eyes a friend of his is an enemy of theirs.”

“I never agreed to be put in danger. I don’t want any part of this!”

“You have no choice.”

Three and a half hours of silence and terror later, we arrived at a vacant boat dock on a marsh. We left the car and walked towards the dock. There was a pile of grass in the water that seemed to be out of place, one of the men walked to the water and pulled the pile of grass, which was actually a camouflage boat cover that was concealing a large airboat with a fan that was at least six feet tall. They put me in the airboat and we took off. We drove around the murky brown waters of the lake until we pulled up to the largest hammock. We got off and one of the men re-concealed the boat under the cover. Then we began to walk inland. I asked them, “What are we doing here? There is not a person within miles of here.”

“You will see just how wrong you are,” they replied.

After walking through dense forest filled with seemingly endless ivy, trees that tower so high that they seem to reach the heavens, and ground crawling with animals and insects of all shapes and sizes that I did not know existed; we approached a concrete wall that was at least twenty feet high with barbed wire on the top and three armed guards standing at the gate. The men I was with showed them their ID cards and the gate slowly opened revealing a long cement road with a three-story brick mansion sitting at the end of it. We walked down the cement road lined with exotic plants from around the globe and guards standing at attention. We got to the front door of the building and with the swipe of a card the redwood doors creaked open and showed a luxurious living room behind it with marble floors, a grand piano, and almost every amenity anyone could imagine.

“What is this place?” I murmured in amazement at the beautiful house.

“This is where your newest and most important patient lives.”

I was wondering who could afford a house with such beautiful craftsmanship when I saw him strolling down the winding marble stairs in his bathrobe; my patient was the President of Argentina himself.

I was staring in amazement when he said, "So you are the esteemed doctor that will be taking care of me. You are younger than I expected." Turning his attention to one of his men he said, "Are you sure you have the write guy?"

I interjected by saying, "Yes sir, I will be your doctor. I am the best there is."

After looking me up and down for several minutes he said, "Okay, you will do."

"Thank you sir, so shall we go back to the hospital so I can see what's wrong?"

"No," he responded. "You will be working here. We have set up a room with all of the modern equipment you could find in your hospital. Follow me, I will show you." We walked up the marble stairs and through a long hallway with seemingly endless doors until he abruptly stopped, opened a tall white door and walked in with me shortly coming in behind him. The room had wooden floors, a window which was more like a glass wall which revealed the whole landscape, and it was covered with equipment, some that was not even the hospital could not yet afford. "Shall we begin?" he said while clapping his hands together.

"If you want to," I responded. "Sit down on the chair please." After he sat down I proceeded to check his heartbeat, his ears, his reflexes, and last, his blood pressure. All of it was off for a man his age. "What seems to be wrong?" I asked.

"I have been having stabbing headaches and I have not been able to think straight."

"I am going to give you a MRI and send the results to the hospital."

"No need for that," he said. "We can test it here."

I then gave him the test and waited for the results to come back. The results finally came back, and he had multiple brain tumors. I walked back to the president and said, "Sir, I am sorry to say that you have brain cancer."

"Okay," he responded with so little emotion that it seemed that he did not hear me or understand.

"You have stage four cancer sir, there is almost no chance of survival. Any way to get rid of it would be a very dangerous, maybe even impossible." I said again thinking this time he would understand.

"I know; you already told me," he said with as little emotion as the first time. "It is getting late. I will get my men to show you your room."

One of the men came in and led me halfway down the hallway and opened the door, shoved me in and slammed the door behind me. I took off my shoes and coat then I slowly fell asleep.

The next morning I woke up fearing the upcoming confrontation with the president. I sat up and whipped my eyes. Then I realized I was no longer in the room that I went asleep in, I was no longer in the president's mansion, I was in my apartment in the city of Buenos Aires. I tried to go back to sleep thinking that it was a dream but when I woke up again I was still in my apartment. I proceeded to do my morning routine of brushing my teeth, taking a shower and getting dressed. I walked into the kitchen and saw a very large stack of money sitting on the countertop, I then counted it and it was one million four hundred thousand Argentinian pesos, over one year's salary for even the top American surgeon. I stood in shock staring at the money until I snapped out of it and started to make a pot of coffee and turn on the television. I sat down with my coffee and the newscaster said, "Just in, the president had an interview denying all of the allegations of his being sick and that there is no need to worry and no need for a sickness to sway voters in the upcoming election."

It took a moment to register in my head that the president is lying to the public so he would get re-elected. I immediately ran to the phone to call the news station to tell them the truth about the president.

"Hello, you have reached CNN Buenos Aires. How may we help you?" said the news stations secretary.

"Yes, I have something to tell you about the story you just ran. The president does actually have cancer. I did a MRI on him yesterday and he has four brain tumors," I said.

"Wait one second," she said.

A few minutes later I once again turned my attention to the television and the news caster said, "Breaking news, we have just been told by the president's personal doctor that the president was given an MRI and has brain tumors. He might not be able to survive another term." After I heard her say that I first smiled then I thought of what I just did. I could have just changed the election and thus, the history of Argentina. Entering my car to go to work, I began to get ready for my apology about missing a day without letting them know in advance and a fake story about why I missed it. When I returned from work there was a car in my driveway. I did not think anything of it and walked inside. Sitting on the couch, waiting for me, were two of the men that had taken me to the president's house. They immediately grabbed me and put me in the trunk of their car and drove off. What seemed like an eternity later the car came to an abrupt start and I heard them get out. Then they opened the truck and pulled me out but I could not see for the first minute or two due to the change from the dark of the trunk to the blazing sunlight outside. When my eyes finally adjusted I was tied to a chair next to a large metal table with one of the men sitting at the other side of the table with a gun.

"Where am I?" I asked.

"Did you tell the press that the president has cancer?" he replied.

"I will tell you if you tell me where I am!" I yelled.

"If you do not tell me if you told them I will shoot you." He replied.

"Yes," I reluctantly replied. "It seemed like the right thing to do at the time."

"Why would you lie to the press?"

"I did not lie, I told the truth."

"That is not what the president said."

"The president is lying!"

"Who am I going to believe, you or the president? Some random doctor or the man that signs my checks? Anyway, did you tell the press that he has cancer so he would not be re-elected? Were you trying to rig the election? Were you committing treason which is punishable by death?"

"No! I would never do any of those things!"

"Why should I believe you? You have no evidence to support your statement which makes me think that you are lying."

"But I am not!"

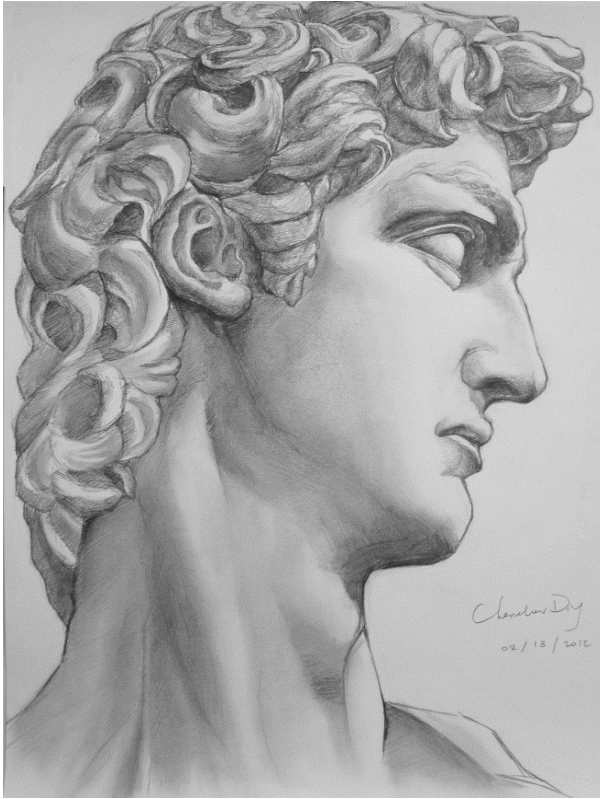
"You have committed the act of treason. You will be sent to execution tomorrow unless you can prove your case."

Two men walked in the room and dragged me into a small, dimly lit cell with only one window. I started to think about how I will be killed because all I have is my word which no one will believe. Then I started to think about my family and how they will never know what happened to me, and then I slowly cried myself to sleep. I woke up the next morning thinking that it was my last day of the earth, and all I could do was pray and hope that it was all a big mistake, that the president will

come in and say it is true, that I will get to go home again. The time came; the men came and dragged me out of the cell and down the hall to my death. All I could do was plead with the men that they would not kill me, that I was telling the truth, and that I was sorry. We finally got me to the room with the electric chair; they opened the door and strapped me into the ice-cold chair. All of the men left the room just leaving my fate and me. Sitting in the chair, I was anticipating the shock, seconds passed, minutes passed, but still no shock. Then, the man that interrogated me came in the room and unstrapped me from the chair. I asked him what was happening and he said, “The President just died of complications. You are free to go.”



BICYCLE *pencil drawing by Chandler Ding*



DAVID pencil drawing by Chandler Ding

Bon Hiver

i could've

written a song or two
(three, even)
about my good winter,

bony black metal
like the vacant
(unused)
fireplace.

while i held my mother's
limp fleeting hand
(sorry Mom)

in the twinkled cheap light
of a giftless xmas tree
leaden in her ornaments.

i'd gone upstairs

but even half-asleep
the house buzzed with Dad's
silent whispers

i'm never there around Christmastime
so i don't know about her ghost

but summer nights
you can still find her scent
buried
in the la-Z-boy's sallow beige fibers.

by Cooper Henkel

Sailing Away

by Hayes Laporte

Ten minutes, I think to myself. *This last year of high school has had its ups and downs but I am excited to see it coming to an end.* I keep on staring at the clock begging for summer to begin. I can't wait to go sailing with my friends, hang out at the pool, and go to crazy parties. *Five minutes to go! So close!* At this point I am at the edge of my seat, I can't wait to hear the bell and get out of here. I like school, but homework is no fun at all. My best friend, Jake, leans over and whispers to me, *One more minute..* Jumping out of my seat as the bell goes off, I run into the hallway. With the hallways filling up quickly, the warm summer air blows in through the door.

Waking up around 7:00, I jump out of bed, and start packing my bag. After taking a shower I head down stairs. As I walk out the door, I grab some food and say goodbye to my parents. Today marks the first day of my sailing and camping adventure. My friends and I are going to be sailing my Dad's boat to an island where there is a log cabin. Our plan is to stay in the small cabin for a week and then sail back home. Once I reach my Dad's boat, I put my bag of clothes under the deck to keep it dry. Within thirty minutes, five of my friends are on the boat and ready to depart.

We start sailing for a few hours until we eat lunch. Our lunch consists of turkey and cheese sandwiches. The box lunches smelled like the lunch food I am used to eating at school. While I am eating, I notice what a beautiful day it is. Sun shining, winds blowing, it is a great day to be sailing! We are sailing off the coast of Florida. Right now, we cannot see any land. All we have is a few paper charts, and a GPS to help us find the island. Our sail is going to take us around 24 hours. With the steady winds blowing, we take shifts on deck sailing throughout the night.

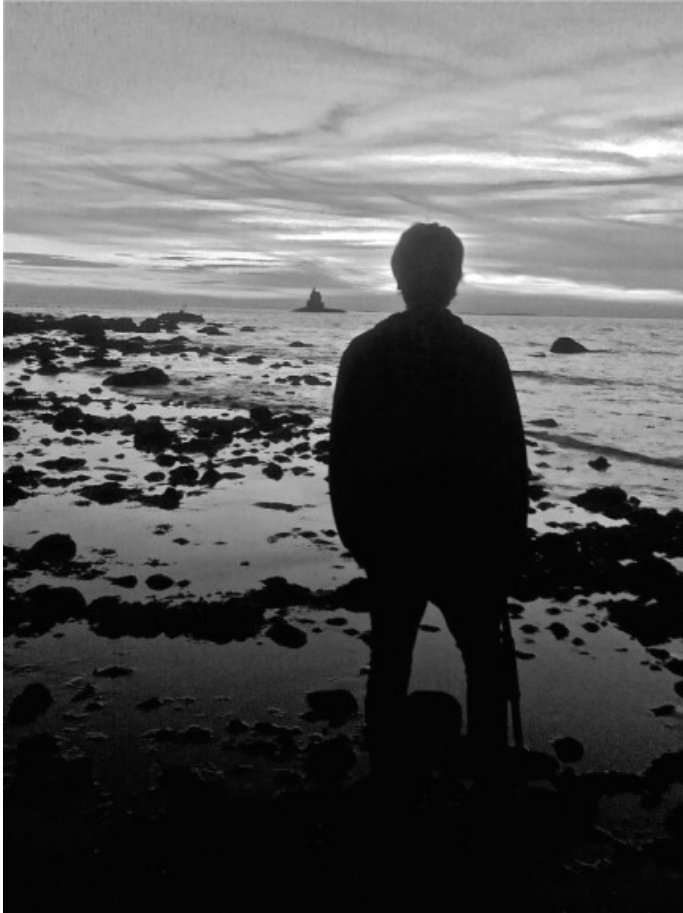
The next day I knew we had to be close. We should start to see a little small dot, our island, in the distance very soon. Today feels different though. The wind is steady but something doesn't feel right. The air has a strong salty taste. With hours passing, one of my friends pointed out a small storm cloud in the distance. From where we were, it looked very small and not an opposing threat. Within about 20 minutes, the rain cloud got closer and closer. As it got closer, the cloud had grown in size.

The winds started to blow hard. The rain started to come down harder and harder. My friend pointed out how we could start to see many small islands. "We have to start going faster if we don't want to get in big trouble with this storm!" said one of my friends.

The storm intensified by the minute. Now it was pouring on deck, winds reaching new records. My Dad's boat started to heel over.

Another one of my friends asked me, "Do you think we should take down the sails? This storm is bad and it looks like it's not going to get better." As I was answering, my voice was drowned out by the loud thunder. The seas were very high and shaking the boat vigorously. Lightning was striking everywhere. I knew we were in trouble but we could not do anything except try to ride out the storm.

The rain got so thick that I could barely see the bow of the boat. I froze for a second as I watched a huge wave crash onto our starboard side. I could quickly feel the balance of the boat uneven. A flashback happened at that instant of when I was younger and would try to walk across a thin piece of wood or metal. Sometimes I would make it across, other times I would tilt to the side and fall off. The boat was tilting and I knew I was going to fall off. The boat teetered on its side. I watched in front of my eyes everything on the deck sliding off into the ocean. The moment our mass hit the water, I knew we were in deep trouble. Right as I saw it go down, I could feel the deep cold



SILHOUETTE digital photo by Will Strothe

water cover my body. I knew I had to swim away to be safe, but I was astounded by what had just happened. At that moment I blacked out in the water.

A few seconds later I woke up, finding myself sinking towards the bottom of the ocean. My eyes flared open. I looked around and saw light. I started swimming up towards the surface as my lungs felt like they were about to explode. When I saw only a few inches of water between my mouth and air, I flung my head out of the water and gasped for the air. I started to swim a little way away from the boat. Once I got my bearings back, I approached the boat to look for my friends. As I got closer, I could see all five dead bodies of my friends floating around in the water. Once I reached the boat, it had already turtled. I began to yell, wishing I would hear a response. My eyes started to flood with tears as I looked around to find any type of flotation device. I found an

emergency life raft a few yards away. I swam to the small box and opened it. The raft quickly inflated.

The current was very strong, making me drift away very fast in the rubber life boat. I couldn't stop staring at my Dad's boat capsized in the water. The thought of my five best friends dead came in my mind. I couldn't leave them back behind in the water, but I knew I couldn't go back. I shut my eyes and started to pray. *Open your eyes, wake up, this whole thing is just a dream.* I slowly rose out of my sleep in a daze. It felt like hours had passed until I felt truly awake. I looked around and my heart dropped, I was not dreaming, it was reality. "Damn it!" My lip started to twitch as more tears started to come. I put my head in between my knees and closed my eyes.

The soft sound of the water in the background was the perfect sound for sleeping. I slowly lifted up my head and saw the sun start to rise up above the horizon. I quickly looked around to find my bearings. To my surprise, I had been washed up on an island. I jumped out of my lifeboat and started to explore the island. The island was small, about 300 yards in total. There were coconut trees spread throughout the island. I spun around and saw nothing but the ocean. I knew I was going to die.

I searched my pockets for anything to write on. I found a piece of paper. Since I knew I was going to die once the coconuts ran out, I made a small incision on my finger and started to write a note to my family back home. I told them what had happened and that I loved them. Once I was done, I folded up the piece of paper and put it in my shirt next to my heart. I found a tree and sat against it. I was there waiting, just how I was waiting to get out of class for summer, but this time I was waiting for death.

Number Five

by Jennings Milholen

Well, Jim, here we are nearing the end of the 2019 Men's NCAA National Championship game. We have the orange and white Syracuse Orange with a substantial lead over our green and white Michigan State Spartans. With a media timeout here we have about five minutes of game time left on the clock.

The young superstar JayShawn, huffing and puffing, bends over and grabs the shorts of his number five uniform as he listens to what his coach has to say during this timeout break.

"Well, Jim, I cannot believe the way this game has turned out so far. It seems like Michigan State did not even show up tonight," says Clark Kellogg.

"Jim, it looks as if the young super star JayShawn Smith has completely forgotten the game of basketball. He came into this game averaging 27.4 points per game in the tournament, but tonight thirty-five minutes into the game he has only seven points," says Clark, exasperated.

"Well, Clark, you do have to remember that he has never played for the national title before, not to mention this is his first year of college basketball," says Jim.

"Jim, it looks like the game is back underway after that short timeout. Let's just hope they do something quick so that this game does not turn into a fifteen point lead by Syracuse as the final," states Clark.

After the short timeout break young JayShawn, strong and stable, walks back onto the court looking like he has his head back on his shoulders. Michigan State quickly inbounds the ball to JayShawn; he seems to have level of attentiveness now that he did not have a few moments ago.

"Jim, do you notice anything different about JayShawn?" asks a pondering Kellogg.

"I do, Clark, JayShawn seems much more alert and energetic. Whatever pep talk he received during the break really seems to have changed him," says Jim.

JayShawn, dribbling just outside the arc, watches for the open guy to pass to. He finds his right wing man, open and ready. JayShawn quickly passes to him. His wing man, quickly guarded, causes the defense to shift and giving JayShawn just enough time to cut, receive a pass, and hit a quick three.

"We could be on to something, Clark. As we all know it's much easier to shoot once you get the first to fall. JayShawn could get more comfortable and turn this game around," says Jim Nantz.

"You could be right, Clark. He seems more relaxed now that he has gotten one to drop easily," says Clark.

A Michigan State guard, swift and alert, quickly jumps on the Syracuse point guard, inbounding the ball and bringing it up court.

"Wow, absolutely unbelievable, Clark, the Michigan shooting guard has stolen the ball, brought it up and got a quick pass over to JayShawn on the wing where he knocked down his second three since the T.O.," says Jim.

"Looks like a ball game after all, Michigan will not go down without a fight," says Clark.

Syracuse inbounds the ball again; JayShawn quickly foresees how the play will develop. Swiftly, as if with no effort, JayShawn swoops in and pickpockets the Syracuse point guard.

"Look, Clark, now JayShawn has just gotten himself a steal he beelines up court, he has now passed off to the Spartans number fifteen, a small forward, for the wide open lay-up," says Jim.

“Jim, this is unbelievable. Michigan’s only down by four with Syracuse bringing it up the court,” says Clark.

The Syracuse point guard, calm and still seemingly under control, brings the ball up court.

“Clark, it looks like Syracuse will get their first shot attempt since the timeout. Nope, they have missed it as well and the rebound has fallen into the hands of Michigan State,” says Jim.

The Spartans have the ball and bring it up court; JayShawn passes and cuts to the right wing.

“Clark, this is truly remarkable JayShawn just hit his third three since play began a minute and a half ago. It’s unbelievable--he has caught fire,” says Jim

“Jim, Michigan has scored eleven straight unanswered points. I cannot believe what I am seeing,” says Clark Kellog in utter shock.

“I mean, come on, Clark, this is unheard of for something like this to happen this late in the national championship game,” says Jim.

Syracuse brings the ball up court. The point guard of the Orangemen, starting to show his nerves, passes off to his right wing who accidentally tips the ball out of play as he tries to accept the pass.

“Jim, it looks as if no one on this ball teams wants the ball in their hands,” states Clark. JayShawn, watching and waiting, quickly passes to his small forward who accepts the pass and buries the shot in the bottom of the net.

“Holy Cow, Jim, Michigan has just hit another three to take the deficit to only one point now, and with that it looks like Syracuse will have to call a timeout to try and stop some of the Michigan momentum,” says Clark.

“Clark, what do you say we tell the fans out there who do not know the amazing story behind JayShawn Smith,” states Jim

“The fans love JayShawn now. Imagine what they will think when they find out what this kid did to push himself to the level of the player that we see now,” says Clark.

“Well, Clark, I guess since we have a three minute media timeout here along with Syracuse timeout, we could share with everyone about the truly inspirational youth JayShawn was and continues to be,” announces Jim.

“Alright, Jim. Well, why don’t you lead off by telling everyone listening in now about JayShawn as a child,” says Clark.

“Okay, I will. For all of you out there listening in JayShawn started out his career as a small child as many of the great athletes did, but from there JayShawn stood out as a remarkable kid. Not only did he love the game of basketball but he also loved pushing himself and working hard,” says Jim.

“Yes, he did, his workout everyday as a child was simply astonishing for a kid his age,” says Clark.

“I agree, Clark, from six years old he would go to the gym everyday from the four o’clock in the afternoon until eight o’clock in the evening trying to improve his game. When he got there he would start out honing his ball handling skills. He would do everything from dribbling full court going between the legs, behind the back, and even using two different balls to go between the legs at the same time,” states Jim.

“It truly is remarkable what that kid could do with a basketball in his hand at such a young age,” says Clark.

“Once he finished with ball handling he would set out to perfect his shot. He would stay there for hours making shot after shot, to the point where he could hit shots from all over the court in his sleep,” says Jim.

“That was just where he started, Clark. His career after is even more remarkable. He started out his road to fame his first year of high school. As a freshman JayShawn started a point guard for his local high school. He moved the court in what seemed to different than the rest of the players on the court. One of his fellow players once said ‘JayShawn glides down the court with no effort, while everyone pushes themselves to their limits.’ The player was right. JayShawn makes the game seem easier than I have ever seen any athlete do in my entire career, Clark” says Jim.

“It’s absolutely amazing what this kid can do, Jim. In his high school career as a whole he won 84 games and only lost 4. JayShawn averaged 33.4 points per game, with 9 assists, 6 rebounds, and 5 steals. Jim, I don’t know what you think but to me it’s remarkable” says Clark.

“It truly is, Clark. You don’t see very many kids in high school with those kind of stats. You also forgot to mention he won three out of four state championships, and the one loss came because their opponents just played phenomenally well,” says Jim.

“Alright, Jim, it looks like play is resuming on the court,” says Clark.

“Let’s see how this game will turn out. Remember Michigan State is down by only one point with only three and a half minutes to play,” says Jim.

“Jim, what do you think--do you think the timeout will stop any of Michigan’s momentum?” says Clark.

“It has to, Clark, to a certain extent. However I do not think it will do as much as Syracuse needs it to,” says Jim.

Syracuse inbounds the ball. Their shooting guard wants the three, but the pass gets to him seconds to late. He dishes it down the power forward and the Michigan center slings his shot.

“Syracuse has to get something going or Michigan will run away with this game,” says Clark.

JayShawn bringing it up the court, a quick bounce pass to his small forward on the wing, and he gets pickpocketed before he even gets a chance to react. The Syracuse guard that stole the ball takes it coast to coast for the wide-open dunk.

“Uh-oh, Clark, that could swing the momentum of this game, because he jammed that one,” says Jim.

“We shall see, Jim,” says Clark.

JayShawn bringing it up the court swings it to his shooting guard who passes it back to JayShawn as he cuts to the opposite wing where JayShawn accepts the pass. JayShawn, cool and calm as ever, shoots the open three and buries it in the bottom of the net.

“He ties the game with that basket there, Jim,” says Kellog.

“I guess it was not a momentum swinging dunk, Clark,” says Jim.

“Well, Jim, tied ball game with one minute left to play and Syracuse has the ball,” says Clark.

“This could get interesting,” says Jim.

Syracuse brings the ball up court. The point guards, watching and anticipating, wait to see who will make the first move. The Syracuse point guard decides to dish to his left wing that immediately swings it back to him, where the point guard swings it to the opposite wing.

“Looks like Dean Smith’s signature play, four corners, to burn time off the clock,” says Clark.

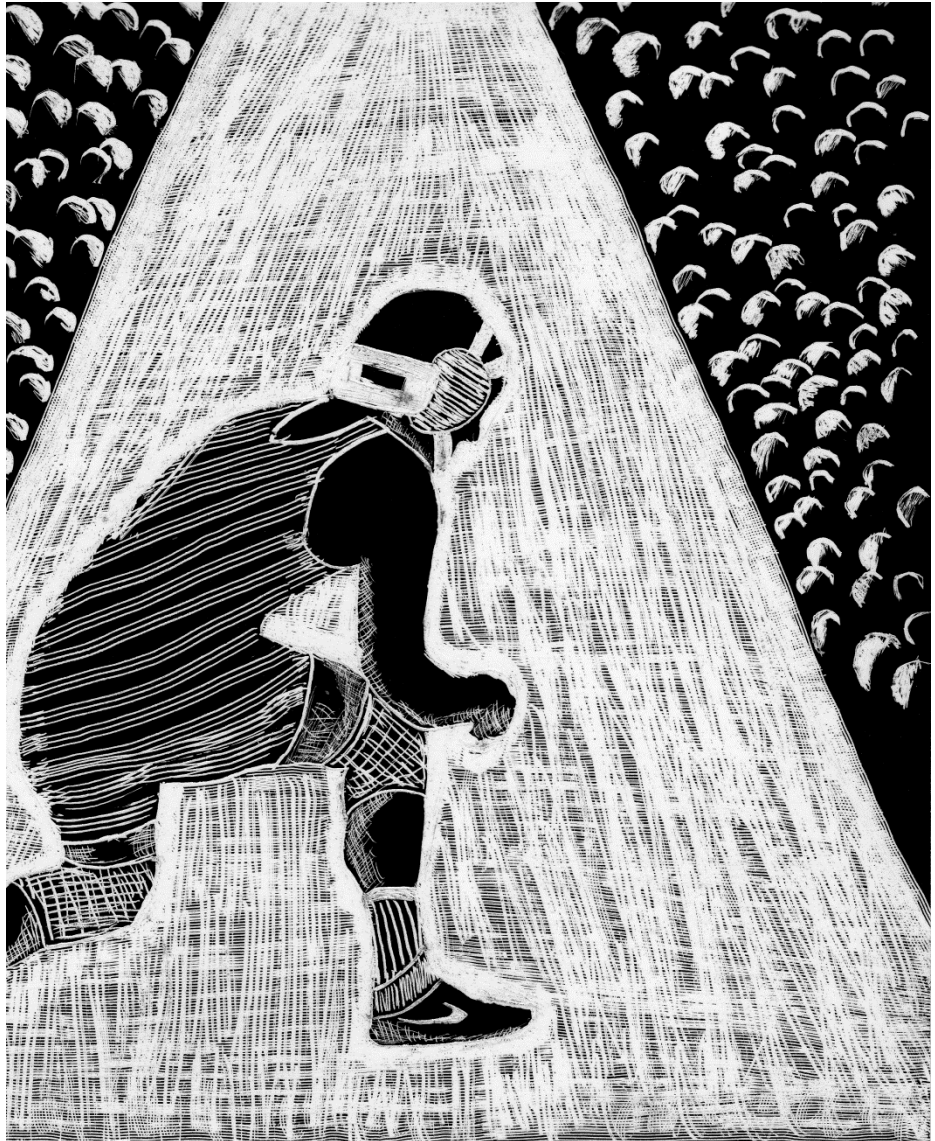
Syracuse with ten seconds on the shot clock, the ball back in their point guard's hands--he blows by JayShawn and manages to get an easy layup.

"You know, Clark, you cannot let someone have that easy a layup this late in the game," says Jim.

"I know, Jim, it's unbelievable. Oh well, Michigan can still win this game if they hit a three on this play," says Clark.

"You really can't stress the importance of this one shot," says Nantz.

JayShawn brings the ball up the court with no shot clock, just 28 seconds on the clock. JayShawn has the ball at the top of the key. He looks for the pass right, it's not there. He swings it left to his shooting guard.



ALONE scratchboard drawing by David Benitez

"It seems like they will play for the last shot in this game," says Clark.

"It looks the same to me, Clark," says Jim.

The shooting guard swings it back to JayShawn with only 7 seconds on the game clock. He dribbles at the top of the key, shaking and trembling, JayShawn manages to put up the last shot of the game from just beyond the arc.

"This is it," says Jim

"Ahhh" erupts from the crowd as JayShawn's shot buries itself in the bottom of the net.

"That is unbelievable!" says Clark. "JayShawn has done it. He has not only won himself and team a national championship, but has done so as a freshmen," says Clark.

"I know what you mean, Clark. He will likely win the MVP of the Final Four Award with his performance in this game," says Jim Nantz.

"It really is remarkable how the youth today become so much better by the year. It almost as if every year the caliber of the players get better and better," says Clark Kellogg.

So Far Gone

by Quincy Grant

Calmly set on the ground, stationed and hidden inside the destroyed half of a building, looking through the scope of my Mosin-Nagant sniper rifle, I placed it through a small, almost unnoticeable hole in the wall. I carefully examined what once was a colossal train station, but now look like nothing but a junkyard for scrap metal. Large trains laying on their sides, often thrashed, thin dust filling the atmosphere. I knew he was out there somewhere, a large vacant area was between me and him. I began to reminisce on the past; I thought of what he had already done to me, it hit me like a train running me over. I decided that this was the final straw; he had taken away too much from me. First Koulikov, whom I had just recently met, but was becoming a great friend and also a teacher. He was shot in mid-air as we were jumping over a broken corridor to the other side-- that only took half a second. That gave me an idea of just how skillful this man was. Next, Sacha, one of my biggest fans and a rather curious young boy, was hung for reasons that I don't know. Thoughts of them started to flood my mind and drown my heart in sorrow and depression. Just this was enough, I had to stop him. All I had left was the love of my life Tania and my closest friend, Danilov, Commisar Danilov, a political officer who I met when we first arrived in Stalingrad.

This was the war of Stalingrad. The Nazis are trying to take over Asia and this was where it all had to stop, it was do or die, the fate of the world depended on this war. All of this is pressured on me, Vassili Zaitskev, a young shepherd boy from the Urals who is a hero in his home country as most skillful sniper in the Soviet Union. Pressured because a political officer, Danilov, who discovered me and made me what I'm not, causing people to have high expectations by publishing newspaper articles calling me a legend I am without my consent. I always tried to stop him but it was impossible.

It has only been a week or so now since I found out what was happening after my recent encounter with a German Nazi sniper who killed my partner. Amazingly skillful and always a step ahead he was, something that I've never experienced before. Danilov told me that this man was Major Konig who was sent here from Berlin just to kill me. Fear and shock filled my body at that moment, as lightning striking a vicious tiger. From that point, an ordinary sniper was one thing he's not. Top notch, maybe expert, would be the only words to describe this man.

Now I'm finally here, I thought to myself. I can finally put an end to all of this. My moment of reminiscence suddenly came to a stop as I heard movement behind me; I looked back and saw Danilov crawling up against a wall on the other side of a large hole in the wall. He was sitting opposite of me, dried blood resting on his cheek.

"Where is he? Where is the major?" he asked.

"A few inches from your face," I replied

"I've been such a fool, Vassili. Man will always be man. There is no new man. We tried so hard to create a society that was equal. Where there'd be nothing to envy your neighbor, but there's always something to envy. A smile, a friendship. Something you don't have and want to appropriate."

I didn't know where he was going with this. I tried my hardest to try to understand what he was trying to say. Then he proceeded to say, "Tania isn't coming back. She's dead Vassili." My heart sank immediately as he said those words. I felt butterflies attacking my stomach. I closed my eyes and allowed it to ease in me while I was breaking down.

"She was right. You're a good man, Vassili. I want to help you, let me do one last thing. Something useful for a change. Let me show you where the major is." He then started to take his

helmet off. I knew what he was meaning when he said that.

"Don't do that. Don't do that!" I yelled at him.

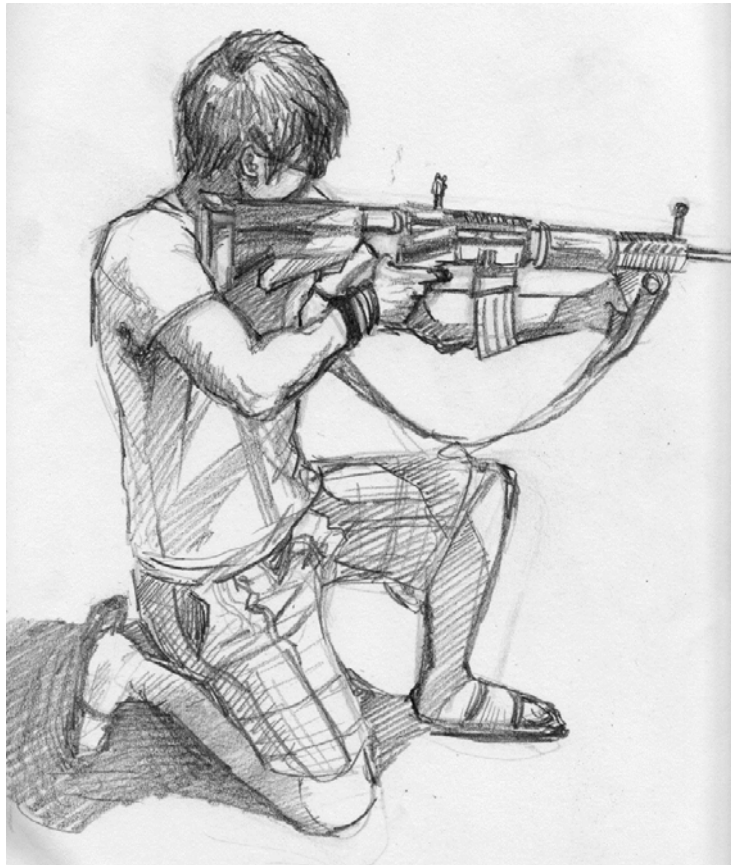
But it was too late; he put his body in the front of the hole. A loud shot rang out and a whirring bullet pierced the middle of his forehead. I was stunned for a few seconds, but my body began to ease up. I stared at his body sympathetically. That was it I thought to myself, everything I love is gone; everything that meant something to me is gone. I then got up and went around to the side of the building to somewhere near the center of the courtyard so I can get a better vantage point, and a good view of the large vacant area in the middle. I knew the major would think that he killed me. I slowly walked around a cargo train and then I saw the major creeping slowly to check his kill. He suddenly froze. He must've seen me in the corner of his eyes. This was finally it. He then stood up straight and slowly took off his hat and looked at me. Anger and frustration started to boil up inside me. I wasted no time and shot him straight through his left eye. It was a few seconds until I drew the sights away from my eye. I walked up to him and stared at his body for a moment, watching blood puddle beneath him. I fearlessly picked up his rifle, walked over to Danilov's corpse and rested it in his arms. I peered over his body for what felt like a year, but was only a few minutes. My mind started to flashback to all the memories we had and I almost drew tears. I said a quiet prayer while holding his hand and left him for the final time.

I slowly walked back to headquarters thinking about everything that happened today. I was relieved that I finally killed him but still depressed about losing everything. Two months later we received great news. We learned that the Nazis finally surrendered and we won the war. Celebrations rang out; everybody was dancing and having fun. At that time I received a letter from Tania; I was beyond surprised and joyful. The letter contained directions to the hospital she was located. I found the place and asked the registrars if she was there, but they kept denying it. I was becoming agitated until I looked forward and saw Tania lying on her bed. She turned her head towards me and sat up. I couldn't believe it. I quickly ran over to her, my heart pumping rapidly. My heart filled with joy as tears started to roll down my cheeks, when I finally made it to her and we hugged, it finally felt as if one part of my life has been repaired.

PRACTICE SHOT

pencil drawing

by Chandler Ding



The Greatest Football player in the World: Alejandro David

by David Duplechin

Chapter I: Alejandro meets his destiny

In a small, poor town in Guatemala, a fine 17 year old man named Alejandro David (Daved) is in a struggle in his life. He is a kid that would pick up anything and chuck it a hundred yards. When he throws, he would break the items and he would get in trouble for it. He is in great shape, likes to run three miles a day, and works out on a daily basis. When he gets done working out, he turns on the television, and a football game appeared. It is the New Orleans Saints vs. the New York Jets in Super Bowl LV. This was the most exciting football game in history. The game is so exciting and phenomenal that Alejandro is willing to do anything to play football. Guatemala only had soccer and baseball, and he hated both of those sports. He didn't know how he can play football. So he left Guatemala, and was off to a boarding school for his senior year to play football. The school was Christ School, the number one football program in the nation. He went to America, free and excited, to continue his new destiny.

When he arrived in scenic Asheville, N.C., he is surprised how exciting this place is. All the sudden, a random person came by.

"Welcome to Asheville," said some random guy in his thirties. "My name is Mark Moroz. I'm the football coach of Christ school." Coach extends his hand out.

"My name is Alejandro David. I'm from Guatemala."

"Nice to meet you, Alejandro," Coach replied politely

"Coach, I want to join your football team." Alejandro blurted out in a nervous response.

"But you're from Guatemala. How do you know about football?" Coach replied in a confused manner.

"I watched a game called the Super Bowl a couple months ago."

"Oh my god, that was the most intense game I've ever seen in my life. Ok, so you want to play football? What position do you want to play?"

"The person that throws the ball." Alejandro, trying to show the motions of the quarterback.

"You mean the quarterback?" Coach corrected him

"I guess."

"Well, then, come with me."

Then Alejandro and Coach Moroz are off to Christ School. They have a little conversation on the way there. When they got to Christ School Alejandro, with his eyes wide open with excitement, is amazed by the beauty of school. He loves the campus and everything about it.

"So, why are you here in the middle of July? Early sports don't start until a whole month." Coach was really confused

"I had nowhere else to go."

"What do you mean?"

"My parents died a month ago. I lived with a good friend of mine and he moved to Mexico."

"Then how did you get into Christ School?"

"It was really tough. My mom inherited a bunch of money for boarding school and I had to dig ditches for extra money for the flight."

"Oh. I see."

They both got out of the car, and he shows him to his dorm: Noland House. Alejandro brought nothing but two pairs of torn clothing and a hand-made football that he made for himself. Coach, with sorrow, was shocked how much he sacrificed just to get into school.

Coach quickly hides his feeling. "Okay. We are going to put you in Noland House because you would be closer to the sports complex."

"Okay, sounds good to me."

Coach grabbed some of his clothes. "I see you are low in clothing. Here, take these clothes," said Coach. He gave him all of his old clothing to him plus a hundred bucks for the bookstore. "If you need some extra supplies, go to the bookstore in the student center."

Alejandro is surprised at the kindness he was given here. Everyone is nice to him. No one hates him. He meets new friends that live on the campus. He is having a blast with his new friends and teachers. He calls this place Home.

Early sports quickly begins. He is surprised how all of these students were here to play football. They are all big and athletic. They register and after that, they all go to the locker room to get their equipment. He thinks the helmets were very nice. They are Irish green that shined with golden facemasks and CS on them. Then they hustle outside and run four gassers and stretch. Then Coach calls his entire starting defense with an offensive scout team.

Coach points at Alejandro. "Alejandro. Play quarterback," ordered Coach Moroz.

He hustles out there and got his eyes focused, but he doesn't know where to line up. Then Coach Auch grabs him and he pulls him out and shows him the basics of the quarterback. Alejandro finally understands everything and goes back out there.

"Last play. Make it count! Hail Mary!" yelled Coach Moroz.

Alejandro, nervous, but excited, lined up. They are on the two yard line.

"Down! Set! Hit!"

He takes three steps back. He's looking and looking and then when his receiver passes the forty yard line in enemy territory, he launches the ball, and places the ball in the receiver's hands in the red zone for a touchdown. The coaches are so impressed that they are going to have a three hour meeting after practice about who should start quarterback.

A week later, 98% of his passes hit the receiver or was a catchable ball. He improved so much that he earns the starting position. During the scrimmage, he completes 24 out of 25 of his passes, almost a perfect game.

Chapter 2: Christ School Life

Later on, he makes a bunch of new friends and gets along with his teachers and his advisor, Coach Moroz. He makes straight A's in his AP classes. Life is going perfect for him.

This is the first game of the season. Alejandro is pumped, but really nervous.

"Are you ready?!" yells Coach Auch, trying to pump up Alejandro.

"AAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!" yells Alejandro ferociously, shaking his body back and forth.

The first play is a kickoff for a touchback. Then the running back runs the ball for 2 yards. Then Alejandro throws the ball straight at the receiver for fifteen yards. Then he throws it deep and scores a touchdown. Then at the end of the game, the final score was 49-0. Alejandro completes 32 out of 35 of his passes for four hundred yards and five touchdowns. The football team and everyone in Christ School are looking forward to this football season.

Alejandro has a phenomenal season. He completes 291 out of 315 of all of his passes for 5,043 yards and fifty-five touchdowns and two interceptions, but they still have one more opponent; Asheville School in the state championship. This is the game of the year. Asheville has seven All-American defensive players, a nationally ranked defense, but Christ School has the number one offense in the whole nation. Both teams are undefeated. They did not have their huge, traditional rivalry because they always had their game on the last game of the regular season and the game was canceled this year due to weather difficulties. They will play the game in Charlotte, N.C. in Bank of America Stadium where the Panthers play. The game is so big that tickets were sold out in less than two days.

Game day finally arrived. It's more crowded than a Carolina Panthers game. Everyone is screaming really loud. Recruiters from major football programs like LSU, Bama, Virginia Tech, Nebraska, and many more are all over the sidelines, eagle-eying all of the players. This is the largest high school football crowd in all of history. This game was like the All-American Under Armor Bowl, except this game is far more exciting.

The Game is so intense that the score is 14-14. It goes all the way to triple overtime. Christ School has the ball on the 25 yard line. Alejandro is scrambling everywhere. The defensive line was all over him. He breaks the tackles. Then he throws the ball in the end zone for a TOUCHDOWN!! The crowd is going nuts, but the Asheville School fans are so depressed that they cry all the way home. Christ School players get the Gatorade bucket and dumped it all over Coach Moroz. They all are very excited. Alejandro is named MVP of the team. On their way back to school, Alejandro has the state championship trophy in his lap as he sleeps.

Chapter 3: Recruitment

Alejandro is asked to all the major football programs. Twenty different teams offered him full rides to their colleges, but he decides to tour only three schools. His final choices are LSU, Hawaii, and Notre Dame. All of these teams want him desperately. All of these teams are BCS ranked, except one, and they all lost their star quarterbacks by the NFL Draft, but Alejandro needed to choose one. He took tours of all his options.

His first tour is Notre Dame. He loves the campus and loves how they run things around there. He also really likes the coaches there.

"Hello sir," comes the head coach in a happy mood. "My name is Brian Kelly. I heard about what happened in North Carolina. That must have been a hell of a game."

"Yes sir," replied Alejandro with some stutter.

He loves Notre Dame and all, but Alejandro does not feel like this is the place to be. So he moves on to LSU. When he arrived at Baton Rouge, L.A., he calls for a taxi to LSU. He is shocked by the campus.

"Damn. This is a huge campus," said Alejandro in a surprised manner with his eyes wide open.

He is surprised how big the campus is. He really likes how they have legit tiger as a mascot. He thinks he would do perfect here. Then out of the blue comes Les Miles.

"Hello. You probably know me anyway, but my name is Les Miles, head football coach of LSU. I heard you had many options before I came here."

"Yes sir, but this school got my attention. Notre Dame wasn't that great of a school for me."

“Ah I see.” Les Miles is really tense. He thinks he has him. “Come over here. I have to show you our workout area, and we have a fancy hotel we stay in for our home games. Come check it out.”

And he checks it out. He absolutely loves LSU. He gets an application before he leaves. He really is thinking of committing to LSU, but he still has one more on his list. Hawaii.

He flies all the way to Hawaii and when he lands on Honolulu, he can already tell he would love this place. He gets a ride from the taxi. Now Hawaii was 1-11 last year and they were not bowl eligible for five years. So, Hawaii hired a new head coach. Ironically, the new head coach was Jon Gruden, the head coach for Super Bowl champions in 2002. This news was the biggest thing going on Sportscenter.

“Hello, Alejandro. My name is Jon Gruden. I saw you play in the state championship in Bank of America Stadium. I was surprised how awesome you were and I saw your stats and that surprised me so much that when I decided to coach here, I will do whatever it takes to get you to come here.”

“Nice to meet you, Jon Gruden.” Alejandro looking at his face funny. “I remembered in the Super Bowl, you were a commentator and I remembered that face of yours.”

“Ah! Looks like someone has good memory. Can you remember some plays?” He winks at him.

“If I saw them, sir.”

They both laugh together.

When he tours the school and meets the team. He can’t find one thing bad about Hawaii. He gets the application and he will be the Hawaii Warriors quarterback.

Chapter 4: College Phenomenon

During his time in Hawaii, Alejandro has a blast with his new teammates. During his freshman year, he wins the Heisman Trophy. He was the first freshman to win the Heisman in college football. He leads his team undefeated to the Rose Bowl and destroyed Texas 56-0. This was the biggest blowout in a Rose Bowl. Alejandro throws for five touchdowns and almost throws a perfect game.

Then in his sophomore year, he goes undefeated again and wins the Heisman again. Then they go to the BCS against Arkansas and beat them 38-17. This was the first non-SEC since 2005 to win a BCS Championship. Hawaii is the big thing now, especially with Alejandro David.

In his junior year he goes undefeated once again, and wins the Heisman again and goes to the BCS and wins it again against Michigan 31-7. Alejandro has an option to go to the draft, but he decides to stay and play one more year because he has had a lot of fun with Hawaii and he wants it to last a little longer.

With his senior year, they barely go undefeated. They struggled with Oregon, USC, and Stanford. Alejandro won the Heisman trophy, but barely. Three LSU players were Heisman finalists, and all three of them were defensive players. Hawaii is going to the BCS at Arizona against LSU. Les Miles wanted to beat Hawaii desperately because he holds a grudge on Alejandro for turning them down. Hawaii’s offense vs. LSU’s defense was the biggest match up in all of college football.

Chapter 5: The Biggest Game of All College Football

In Arizona, the game that everyone waited for to happen has finally begun. Hawaii has kickoff the ball first. LSU gets a gain of thirty. Hawaii’s defense shuts down LSU. So LSU punts the

ball. Then the first play of Hawaii's offense is a PA pass. Alejandro looks around, throws the ball, and it was INTERCEPTED! LSU ran the interception all the way for a touchdown.

At halftime, the score is 24-3, LSU.

"GUYS!" yelled Coach Gruden punching the wall. "WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?! YOU CALL THIS FOOTBALL?! WE ARE DOWN BY THREE TOUCHDOWNS! WE NEED TO GET OUR ASSES IN THE GAME! COME ON GUYS."

It is quiet in the locker room. Everyone thought they lost the game, but Alejandro got up and made a huge speech.

"THIS GAME IS NOT OVER! WE ARE WARRIORS AND WE KEEP FIGHTING TIL IT'S THE END. DO NOT GIVE UP EVER! IF YOU GIVE UP YOUR DREAMS WILL NEVER COME TRUE!! DO YOU WANT??! I DO!! GET UP!!" The whole team gets up. "NOW I WANT THE SECOND HALF NOTHING BUT BLOOD, SWEAT, TEARS!! NOW BRING IT IN!!!!!!!"

The whole team is pumped after that phenomenal speech. They all huddle in together.

"1, 2, 3!" yells Alejandro, in a quick pace.

"WARRIORS!!!" yells the whole team.

Then the team was finally ready to play football. Hawaii gets the ball first. They get a huge gain of fifty on that kickoff. Then Alejandro hands the ball to the running back, but it's a fake! He has the ball and ran it for a touchdown. The whole team is pumped and has a lot of hope in them. Hawaii kicks it off, and then LSU runs it all the way for a touchdown. The score was now 31-10. Now LSU kicked it off to Hawaii, then they got a huge run, but they fumbled the ball! Now LSU has the ball now on the thirty yard line in enemy territory. LSU threw the ball and it was intercepted! Now Hawaii has the ball. Alejandro does a PA pass and he throws it deep. It is caught for a touchdown at the end of the third quarter.

The score is 31-17 in the beginning of the fourth quarter. Hawaii is nervous, but still had faith in this game. They believe they can win this. Hawaii kicks it off to LSU. They had a very short gain of ten. Then LSU hands the ball to the running back. He runs it all the way to the red zone. LSU was shut down and they had to kick a field goal, but it was BLOCKED! Alejandro gets on the field and throws it short for a gain of eight. Then Alejandro looks around and runs the ball. He keeps running! He breaks five tackles! Alejandro runs it all the way for a TOUCHDOWN! Now the score is 31-24 with 2:53 left. Hawaii does an onside kick, but LSU gets the ball. Hawaii's defense hustles on the field. LSU throws the ball at the goal line. They waste a minute. Now they try to run the ball, but there was a FUMBLE! Time was ticking. Hawaii has no timeouts left. Alejandro gets the ball throws it deep and the pass is completed in the redzone! Alejandro spikes the ball. Hawaii has 0:02 left. Alejandro gets the ball looks and throws it in the endzone for a TOUCHDOWN! The score was 31-30. Hawaii lines up for a field goal. THEY FAKE IT. The kicker runs! The defensive tackles him, but he lateralls the ball to the 2nd string quarterback and he runs! THE TWO POINT CONVERSION IS GOOD!!! HAWAII WINS THE BCS!! The crowd is going nuts. What a game! The final score is 31-32. The team gets the Gatorade bucket and dumps it all over Jon. He is the happiest man after that Gatorade bath. Hawaii gets up and receives their trophy. Then Coach Gruden gets up and makes a speech.

"Wow! What a game! This was the best team I've coached in my whole life. They pushed themselves and they loved the game football. We have made Hawaii one of the greatest football teams in all college football, but there was this kid that pushed this football team since he was a

freshman. This is not just the greatest quarterback in Hawaii history, but of all college football. I present you Alejandro David.”

Alejandro steps up and holds the trophy in the air. The fans are going nuts.

“Wow! We did it again. People are giving me all the credit for this team, but without the talented receivers, the protective linemen, the hard-running half backs, and the hard-hitting defense, and our phenomenal coaching staff, I would be screwed. Football doesn’t have heroes, it has teammates. I am glad that I joined this awesome football team. Now like I said in the locker room. Warriors don’t give up until the end, and we never gave up. We kept pushing ourselves until the game was over. This is what football is all about; never giving up!”

Epilogue:

In the NFL Draft, Alejandro David is the number one draft pick for the New Orleans Saints. In his rookie year, he leads the NFL in touchdowns, passing and rushing yards, highest passing percentage, and the least interceptions. He has made the Pro Bowl as a rookie and made it to the Super Bowl. He won it 31-28. He is named MVP of the Super Bowl.

All of his years are like this. He makes twelve straight Super Bowls, and they win them all! He retires after he wins the 12th Super Bowl in a row. He is announced in the Hall of Fame five years

later. He breaks many records and they are still stand yet today and probably would never be broken.

After his football years, he goes back to Guatemala and introduced the sport of football to everyone. Then it spreads all over the world. Many countries decided to play football. Football becomes so popular that it is in the summer and winter Olympics and they all make their national football teams. Then later, they made a World Bowl. Today, football is now the greatest sport in the world, and it’s all thanks to the greatest quarterback in the world, Alejandro David.



WARRIOR

pencil drawing
by Chandler Ding

The Passings of the Crown

by Conor Stuart-Roe

He was drinking boisterously with friends when he heard the news. A messenger boy scurried up to Arhondel, fidgeting with an urgent look on his face, but Arhondel told the boy to wait. He waited a quarter of an hour to clear his head before allowing the boy to speak. When the boy at last gave his message that Arhondel's father, Londe Lansemmor Pallo Dunnellisdes, was dying, the words struck like lead. Arhondel heart skipped a beat, and his foolish smile vanished. The courts would fall to shambles. The Western conquests would be put on hold, just when it had become so important to push forward. Worse still, Arhondel had knowingly waited fifteen minutes for the knowledge of his own father's illness. Perhaps it was the drink, but Arhondel had wept then, something that he had not done since he was a child. But there he was, loudly sobbing like a small boy. He wept for the people. For the country. And just perhaps, for his father.

He had gone then, with a somewhat sharper mind, to visit with his father. The emperor was lying in a feverish slumber in a cramped room in a far wing of the palace. The room was filled with what seemed to be every healer, apothecary, and priest in the empire, all hurrying about in a dizzying frenzy. As Arhondel stood there, loitering in the midst of all of the confusion, he realized how little he really wished to see his father. The two had never been particularly close, as the emperor had favored Arhondel's older half brother, Hammuc. Arhondel had no particular reason to see him now, when they would be unable even to have a coherent conversation. He might have been appalled by the lack of empathy he had for his father, had he had the time. As it was, his mind was already swirling with thoughts about the future.

If his father did indeed die, the most important thing to do would be to find a successor as quickly as possible, so that the all of the matters of the empire could continue to function as though they had never been interrupted. Arhondel, pondering with grim dismay, knew how unlikely this was. The Pampar would insist on deliberating for months over which candidate would reduce the tariff upon salt exports the most, or would subsidize silk goods, or other such quietly selfish minutia. Arhondel was frustrated with this thought. However, he also realized that, whatever the case, he must choose who he would support.

The most obvious choice would be Hammuc, the emperor's eldest son. Hammuc was very militarily minded, and in fact currently away with his loyal army, fighting the heathen in the West. He was hot-blooded and short-tempered, and, in Arhondel's opinion, had taken one too many blows to the head. Arhondel realized that he would not like to support Hammuc in his inevitable efforts for the throne. He also realized, with some relief, that Hammuc had doubtless not yet heard the news, which may buy Arhondel some time to do a bit of persuading on behalf of whomever he chose before his brother stormed into the Hall of the Pampar demanding the crown.

The question then remained, of who Arhondel ought to support for the throne. He, of course, inherently believed his own ideas and opinions and ideas to be correct. He was reported, with good reason, to be the wisest of the emperor's children. He would not make a bad leader in theory. However, Arhondel knew that he was also a quiet and withdrawn person. He did not have the passionate persuasiveness to put his ideas into practice, nor did he relish the idea of being thrust into the public eye. He decided that he wanted to clandestinely rule, but that it would be best to govern through a puppet of sorts.

It did not take long from this thought for Arhondel to alight upon who would be the best pawn in his game: Temmit. Temmit was Arhondel's younger and only other brother. He had the charm and wit that his brothers did not, and he would be far better at persuading the Pampar. He also had the advantage of being the king's son, the only remaining candidate who could claim such. Lastly, he looked up to Arhondel, and would surely do anything to please his older brother. It would not be difficult to bend his will to that of Arhondel. Although Temmit would likely never realize it, Arhondel intended for him to serve as emperor as a mere proxy for Arhondel himself.



The next night, Arhondel went to pay a visit to Temmit to convey his idea. As he sat in his coach, coarsely bumping along the gravel roads to his brother's villa, he plotted as to how he would win Temmit over to his own ideas. He knew how easily flattered Temmit could be, and how hungry he was for approval. As his coach drew up the long road toward the looming castle, Arhondel decided that simply asking could sufficiently overwhelm his brother.

Arhondel, pulling up next to the great manor, leapt out of his coach and strode briskly through the gloom toward the great mahogany doors. Arhondel knocked a single knock, only for the door to be pulled open by a slight servant, who immediately darted off to fetch his master. Temmit appeared at the top of the stairs and began rushing down a moment later, eyes wide and laughing in surprise. Servants, bowing and scurrying, brought in tea and bread, while Arhondel leapt right into his proposition, quickly telling Temmit why Hammuc must be stopped and, to more effect, why Temmit would be a fitting emperor. He carefully avoided divulging his own devious role, of course. At first, Temmit modestly dismissed Arhondel's compliments, but as he heard more, he grew delighted by the idea of becoming emperor and by his brother's praise and approval. He soon agreed to vie for his father's place, and to hold conference with the Pampar, the ruling council of the empire, immediately. The two brothers then remained in the great front hall, plotting and joking over a bottle of brandy until the sun rose once more.

The first, and by far simplest, part of his plan was complete, and Arhondel was much pleased.

CASTLE

pencil drawing
by Jonathan Yung



The speech the next day was but one of many that followed. Over the next fortnight, Temmit made regular speeches, written by Arhondel, to the Pampar to win them over. He seemed to be doing quite well in his task, and all might have gone smoothly had the unfortunate, but eventually inevitable, happened. Hammuc arrived in the city.

When he learned the extent of Temmit's support-garnering, he flew into one of his usual rages. He demanded before the Pampar that he had the sole right to the crown, and gave an angry speech to the people, passionately asserting much the same. Arhondel was glad that this seemed to damage the Pampar's opinion of Hammuc.

After a few days, Hammuc realized that he was getting nowhere, and he changed tact. He quieted down publicly, and went to visit with the emperor. He claimed to be seeking advice and support, and giving consolation. Arhondel, however was suspicious. Although he had not seen his father for several weeks, he doubted very much that he would be in any state to grant advice. He also had little trust in Hammuc's character.

He was not surprised, then, when his father passed in the night a day later.



With the emperor dead, the kingdom needed a new leader, and deliberations began. Arhondel dreaded the amount of time he supposed might be wasted upon the process. His dread turned to pleasant surprise, however, when the Pampar announced that they had already made their decision just four days after the emperor died. They almost unanimously supported Temmit.

When Arhondel heard this news, he was holding a private council with Temmit, stowed away in a dark hall of the capital palace. His mood became nearly the reverse of that from the month previous. In contrast to his sobs at his father's illness, he now laughed in exaltation for the future of the empire and for his own fortune. He knew that the people would have a just and wise leadership, as opposed to the unseeing cruelty of his eldest brother. He knew that riches would continue to flow, as they had for a century prior. He knew that the campaign in the West would be neither indulged nor abandoned. All was then right with the world.

As he stepped out for fresh air on the parapet of the palace, his heart stopped cold. Far in the distance, on the crest of a great hill, he saw Hammuc's army, marching at a steady clip for the city.

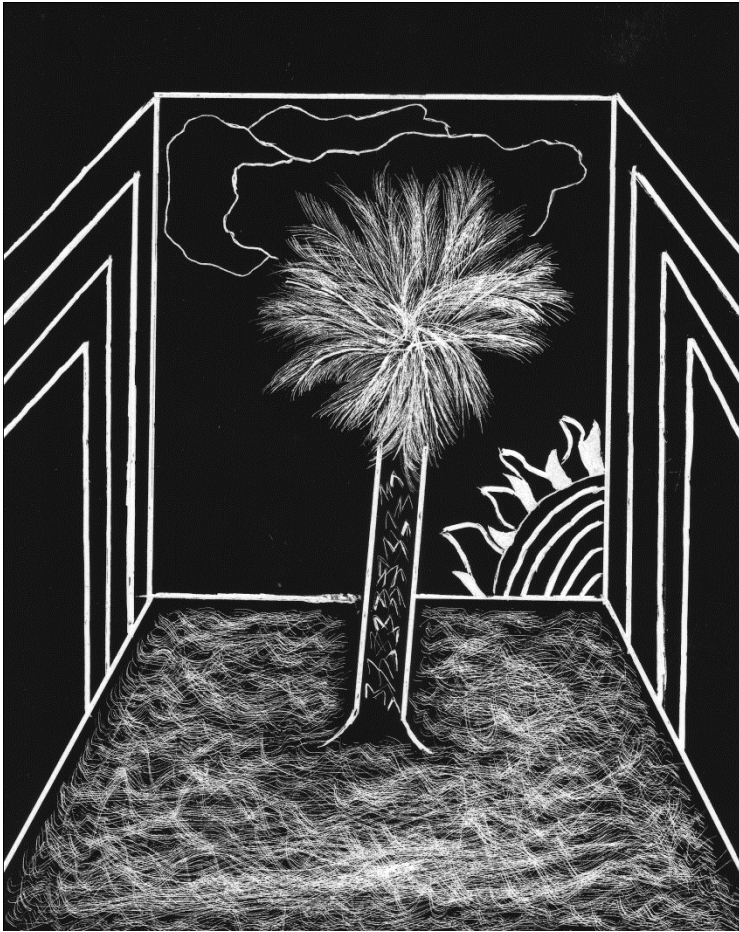


Two years later to the day, Arhondel stood apprehensively in a chamber of the Hall of the Pampar. Any minute, he would be called out to be crowned emperor before the people. A great many things had happened since the fateful day of Temmit's coronation.

Hammuc had attacked the city, resulting in all-out civil war. In the end, Temmit had died and his armies had been defeated at the hands of his more ferocious brother. He had died a proud warrior's death, not faltering from the line when his own brother had looked him straight in the eye and killed him. Hammuc had done a shameful thing in his insatiable hunger for power.

He had made no hesitation in declaring himself emperor. However, when he had walked proudly into the gates of the capital, expecting a hero's welcome, he and his guards were instead overtaken and killed by angry rioters. Only then had a cheer gone up through the mob, who hated the wicked Hammuc.

With all but one prince fallen, Arhondel remained the sole true candidate left for the crown. He was reluctant to take this position, but knew that he had no choice if he wished for the success of the empire. And now he here stood, awaiting the moment when his life, and that of all of his people, would permanently change.



AFTERROOM *scratchboard drawing by Banks Simmons*

walls

window
 (framed by rude cinder)
 a glass wall in itself
 may stop birds mid-flight
 (sometimes for good),
 but us humans—

get a load
 of us.
 aren't we so
 above it all.

beyond that beaming pane
 however, lies a barbed wire-
 topped, partitioned utopia

waiting for us dressed up
 in orange and stripes

by Cooper Henkel

My Savior, the Moon

I stare into the moonlight
 flowing from the perfect orb
 as it hangs in the sky

My mind wanders to many years before
 when I would look up at the same moon
 and believe it followed me,
 my savior from the evil of night.
 With this thought, I fall into a peaceful sleep.

by Chike Ekwonu

A Firm Tree Does Not Fear the Storm

by Conner Allison

Katrina, halfway through its terror in New Orleans, wreaks havoc at only 7:30 in the morning. Levees bow and creak at the mercy of the storm, rushing water floods the metropolis, and disaster swarms the city.

7:30 a.m. Monday August 29, 2005. “Sarah, trust me, stay in that corner. We will be alright; just don’t leave. I need to go get more towels from the closet to plug the bottoms of our doors to prevent more water from getting in; we don’t want any more damage ruining our house than we have now.”

As John goes quickly into the closet to get some bath towels to plug under the doors, what he doesn’t know is that there is a massive threatening pine swaying outside their house as if it was dancing.

“John! Do not leave me! If something happens to you, I can’t survive by myself! You know this. Please. Take me wi-”

Crrrrckkk!... BOOM.

Panicking, John shouts in fear, “Sarah! Sarah!!”



11:00 a.m. Thursday August 25, 2005. “Thanks for tuning in to WWL, AM 870. Here’s the latest news. As you all know, Hurricane Katrina will be coming in soon. Do not hesitate; evacuate. It will be coming with category 5 winds destroying and snapping anything in its path. Pack all loose items inside the house, and evacuate. This is mandatory,” said the WWL meteorologist, Bob Breck. Sarah and John both turn to each other in complete shock. He continued speaking, “The storm will hit approximately around 6:00 a.m. August 29th. Once again, it will hit August 29th around 6:00 a.m.” As soon as they heard the news, they both checked the date and times on their phones simultaneously: 11:00 a.m. August 25th --four days before the storm.

While Sarah was on the phone with her mom, explaining her predicament, John took a quick run to Home Depot to stock up on water, MREs, and plywood to board up the windows of their new house. When John got back, he immediately started preparing the vulnerable house for the worst, while Sarah could not do much but try to stay calm because she and John did not want anything happening to their baby. By the time their whole house was prepared for the storm, it was already the 27th, and Hurricane Katrina was just lurking outside the Gulf. The only option they had now was to evacuate or stay.

Two days before the storm, the traffic backed up so much that evacuating almost becomes impossible. John and Sarah left August 28th at 5:00 a.m., but once they hit the crowded interstate, packed and flooded with honking, they were at a complete stop. Both John and Sarah agreed that evacuating would not work because they would be hit by the storm while in their vulnerable car, which is an absolutely horrible thing to go through. They turned around at the nearest exit and left for home, nervous, confused, and absolutely terrified. Nothing could compare to the fear they were experiencing.

5:50 a.m. Monday August 29, 2005. Roaring thunder, terrifying and powerful, was trailing off in the distance, and lightning surrounded the illuminating horizon. Looking out a window was terrifying in itself. Seeing an immense storm, swirling and threatening, headed your way emitting

walls of water could possibly be one of the scariest things anyone can witness. In ten minutes, the storm would start hammering the entire coast of Louisiana, and nothing could stop this charging bull.

6:30 a.m. Monday August 29th, 2005. The ferocious storm, vicious and brutal, just started passing over the boot of Louisiana as a whole, and it was nowhere near stopping. Half of the trees outside have already fallen, only thirty minutes in. Outside, cars were crushed, houses flattened, and streets partially flooded. This is possibly the worst thing that New Orleans, Louisiana will *ever* experience. The radio signal is going out, so communication of the storm's damage is out of reach. The chances of survival were slim, but possible.



TREE
pencil drawing
by Chandler Ding

7:30 a.m. Monday August 29, 2005. "John! John come quick! Water's seeping under the front door! Get the towels! Hurry!"

"I got it, I got it. We will be fine, babe, alright? Don't worry. Just stay safe. I'm here for you. Don't worry too much; we'll make it. Don't forget to eat and drink; stay hydrated and fed."

While John tried to make their front door water proof, the wind was blowing brutally all around, whistling off the shutters and plywood. Being in this terrible storm caused many people to have nightmares after, and memories of the storm haunt people of Louisiana even today. Some lost everything they owned, some never came back to the state, and others will never be back on this earth.

"Sarah, Sarah, calm down. Stressing and worrying will make this storm worse. We just have to have faith. If anything happens to us, we are both going to heaven, and we know this. God has it all under control."

"John, you don't understand. I'm not worried about my health; I'm worried about the baby. I am afraid he won't make it."

"Sarah, trust me, stay in that consolidated corner. We will be alright; just don't leave. I need to go get more towels to plug the bottoms of our doors to prevent more water from getting in; we don't want any more damage then we have now."

As John goes quickly into the closet to get some bath towels to plug under the doors, what he doesn't know is that there is a massive threatening pine swaying outside their house as if it was dancing.

"John! Do not leave me! If something happens to you, I can't survive by myself! You know this. Please. Take me wi-"

Crrrrckkk!... BOOM.

Panicking, John shouts in fear, "Sarah! Sarah!!"

8:00 a.m. Tuesday August 30, 2005. John, now conscious, wakes up to knocking on his front door. As John stumbles and opens it, Coast Guard personnel flood the room trying to find any victims while two members question him about what he remembers.

"I... I don't remember clearly," John explains.

"Well turn around, does the tree in your house, the flooding bring back anything?"

"Well, I remember the tree falling but after, and before that, it is just a blur to me."

"Do you know this lady over here? Do you have any relation to her?"

As John looks over to see his wife, lying on the floor, dead, everything comes back to him and he explains everything to the personnel, crying. The Coast Guard members were trying to get John and Sarah onto the roof so a helicopter could pick them up, but John just wanted to stay and mourn. One Coast Guard personnel spray painted on the house, "1DB, WL, 9-30," representing one dead body, water leakage, and the date, August 30th.

"Sir, we have to get you out of here, as soon as possible. Your house may not be recoverable. We have a phone for you to call with family you can stay with. Stay calm sir, you are safe with us."

The heroic helicopter lifted off into the air, flying over the terribly destroyed city, looking for people on top of their roofs, trying to be rescued. Everyone will remember this terrible day, and Louisiana's lively spirit will be absent for years.

The newspaper article listing deaths listed Sarah Boudreaux, 29, and Jessica Boudreaux, 1 week. This news article was cut out and given to John as a reminder of this horrible tragedy, and he kept it locked away, never to be opened again.

sperrys

i needed some leather flowers
to place on the grave of
summer '11

two,
in brown,
would suffice.

by Cooper Henkel

sperrys II

bouquet in a shoebox
gentlemen's slippers

found neither at the florist
nor in the forest

they're the right size
yet they don't fit.

by Cooper Henkel



RACEROCK LIGHTHOUSE

digital photo by Will Strothe

Why the Turtle Has a Shell

by Chike Ekwonu

Long ago, before the animals had lost their power of speech and were taken over by man, they lived by species. Each was ruled by a separate king. The kings ranged from the Monkey King to the Spider King. Communication between species soon became non-existent. The Bird King one day grew tired of this and decided how much better the world would be if the connection returned and they learned to live with each other and not as single groups. The Bird King called all his messenger birds over and ordered them to deliver a letter to all the Kings inviting them for a banquet in the clouds. The Kings across the lands were excited upon the arrival of the letter, for none of the other species had thought of communicating with each another, and were even more excited at the thought of a banquet. A trip to the city of the clouds was a rare treat and no other species besides the birds knew of what lay above. They all responded with the same enthusiastic tone and could not wait.

The Turtle King had a reputation with the other turtles as a troll and a sneak; he would constantly steal from the others and find new ways of making them miserable. As soon as he received the invitation to the banquet he had already begun devising a plan to fool the other species, for the thought of passing up the chance to mess with new victims that were not already anticipating his trickery was too much for him.

For the first time in history a grand meeting was held in which the kings of every species gathered to discuss the upcoming banquet. Turtle was the first to speak. "I think that the names King of the Reptiles or King of the Insects are too general of names, we should all come up with new names for ourselves before we go to the banquet," he stated. All agreed it was a grand idea. The King of the Big Cats chose the name Tiger. The King of the Insects decided to be known as Mantis, and the King of the Snakes decided to be known as Viper. Finally The King of the Turtles decided, "My name shall be Everyone." Not wanting to leave him out of the fun, the animals sent a messenger bat up to the Bird King who sent back a reply, "My name shall be Crane."

On the day of the banquet giant birds big enough to swallow a hut glided down from the sky and carried the kings in their beaks up to the City in the Clouds. Everyone stood mouths ajar staring at the magnificent light that radiated from the city; it was as if the sun was right in front of them. The kings enjoyed the festive event, talking and laughing with one another. Before they knew it, it was late into the evening and it was time for the banquet to begin. The Bird King had his servants bring out every kind of food that could be prepared; some of them the other animals had never seen before. "Please excuse me. I must see to my wife, she is ill at the moment" Crane said. "This food is for everyone. Please enjoy, I'll be right back."

The animals helped themselves to the wide array of food that was there. "This... what did you call it, steak, this is great; I may never go back to vegetables again," stated Tiger.

"What do you think you are doing?" demanded Turtle, "That food is for me!"

"What are you talking about?" all the animals replied.

Turtle said, "Have you forgotten that we changed our names before we got here? My new name is Everyone and Crane specifically stated that this food is for Everyone!"

Not wanting to bring bad blood with any of the other animals, the Kings begrudgingly gave over their food and watched helplessly as Turtle greedily consumed until he could not eat any more. "Surely the kings do not want my scraps," he said laughing at the hungry look on their faces. He

grabbed all that was left over and threw it over the side of the cloud. There was a recess before dessert was served and the other kings formed a private meeting.

"If he pulls that again I may lose my head," stated Mantis. "Let us bring King 'Everyone' over to discuss the change in names."

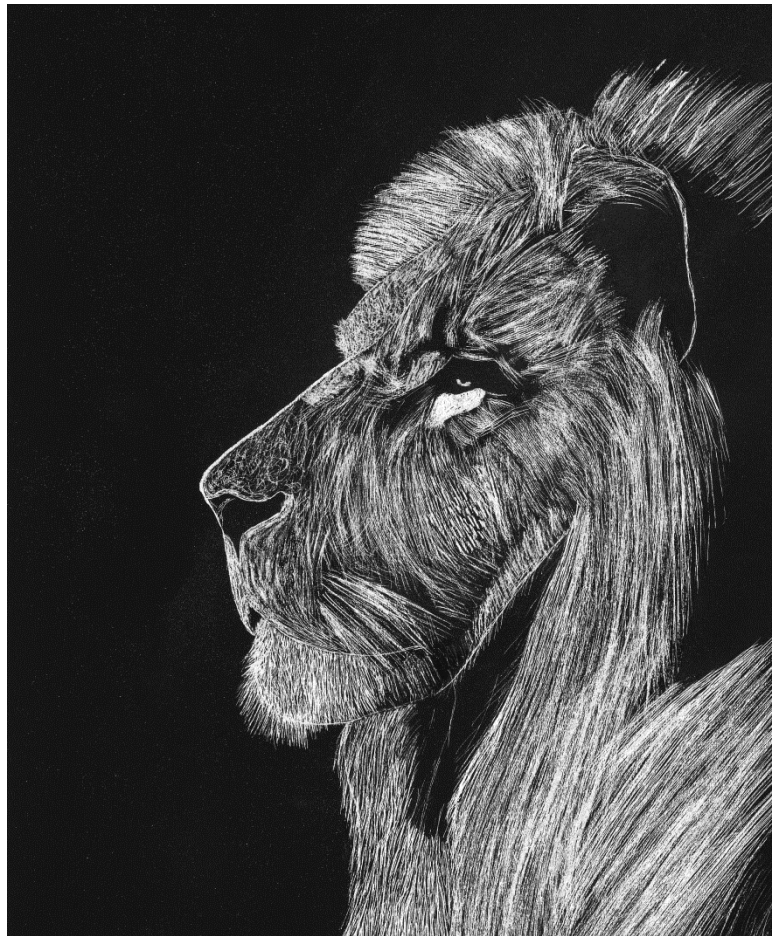
Bringing Turtle over, they discussed their problem with his name. "Fine then, I will change it. My new name will be, All of You," he stated, while failing to conceal his smug grin.

"You see, he will try it again he cannot be trusted," yelled Gorilla, "Cast him of the cloud so that Hades may take his soul."

Finally realizing that his pranking had gone too far Turtle began to run. Following closely behind, the animals' minds were set on permanently getting rid of this nuisance. Turtle finally managed to elude his pursuers by hiding in a nearby building. The building he had escaped into was where Crane had all of his top scientists designing new inventions to make the lives of the birds easier. Walking past a table with prototype machinery he stumbled upon a dome-like creation. Upon reading the label he learned that it was a shield that could withstand high damage and a portable home that could all be work on the back. Slipping into this new discovery, Turtle found it to be a perfect fit. He ran back outside and dared the murderous animals to try to bring harm to him now. Before they could reach him, he hid in the machine. Tiger tried to scratch it open but only ended up filing down his nails; Gorilla tried breaking it with his massive hands but the dome refused to be damaged. Turtle's echoing laugh escaping from within the shield only managed to enrage the animals even further. Picking him up, Gorilla tossed the shell down with such force that the clouds broke apart and Turtle fell through the sky.

Feeling the weightlessness of his free fall, Turtle poked his head out to look around. Freaking out and praying to the Gods to have mercy on his soul, he plummeted. The impact was so great that the machinery imbedded itself into Turtle's very DNA, permanently giving him and any of his offspring the indestructible protection of the shell. Though many would think it was a blessing, the turtles saw this as a curse- the weight of the shell decreased their walk speed so drastically that they could do no more than crawl, and to this day they are cursed with the heavy shell that they must forever wear on their backs.

KING OF BEASTS *scratchboard drawing by Alex Hudak*



Jets and Jealousy

by Sam Grabenstein

I was born in 1982 in a small town called Gainsville, an old coal mine town. My mother died in childbirth. My father is what everyone in the town dreams of being. He is basically like a living god to the few people of Gainsville. You might be wondering how he got that fame; well, he was a famous pilot who shot down 21 planes during World War IV. Some said he was the greatest pilot in the history of warfare. Until I came around; my name is Jordan Pace. I am a twenty three year old sandy haired kid. I never wanted to join the War, but the draft had selected my name. I put my services in the Air Force just as my father had years ago. After one tour of duty I'm the world's most feared pilot, for I have racked up 32 successful kills in combat in only four months.

The year is 2023, and World War V has just ended. I'm returning home from my tour in Japan, where I went from being a nobody to being the most loved and feared pilot in the world. I'm standing in line at Kabuli airbase waiting to get on a plane flight back to Washington. I have decided this is my last time serving after I have seen the horrors of war. Saying a tearful goodbye to my famed plane, the Black Kat Striker, I was ready to go home and receive the parade that the president, my Dad, had promised me. After a couple of hours of waiting for takeoff, the plane finally left the dust filled airbase and headed back to the states. The plane had taken off smoothly from the desert runway and was now flying at a height of 33 thousand feet. As I was about to doze off, a pretty stewardess approached me and asked if I was Jordan Pace. I said "Yes Ma'am." She blushed and asked for my autograph. I signed a picture of my plane she had with the pen she gave me. She asked if I wanted someone to talk to as I was the only passenger on the private jet. I accepted her offer and we spent the next hours of the flight talking. As the plane approached the East Coast, the tiny jet suddenly shook as if something had hit it. I knew immediately what that was. Countless hours of battle had given me knowledge on what was happening. It was the feeling of a Sidewinder X7 missile hitting the plane.

I quickly burst into the cockpit where the captain was trying to save the plane. I yelled for him to "give me the damn controls!" when I noticed there was no pilot. This plane was being controlled by a computer run by the government. I got into the seat and checked all the controls. I noticed a chip under the steering wheel. I yanked the red cord and ripped the chip off. The plane started to drop as the auto pilot had been turned off. I scanned the dashboard to see what the damage was on the jet. The rear tail engine had been destroyed by the blast and the plane would soon be crashing from the loss of power. The pretty stewardess ran into the cockpit screaming. I yelled at her to please calm down. She finally settled down; then after a few seconds more screams. As the plane dropped I told her not to worry and to brace herself for impact. The plane was dropping at a speed of 5000 feet per five seconds. Looking out at the sea I estimated we had about thirty seconds left before impact. I looked into the stewardess's bright blue eyes and told her that "if we survived I would want her to marry me." As I finished this sentence the plane smashed into the freezing waters of the Pacific Ocean.

At five o'clock in the morning, the phone in the oval office rang. President Pace answered the phone. "Hello," he asked in a groggy voice. A stern voice replied "Sir, mission accomplished. Jordan Pace has been taken down." "Very good, very good," replied the president as he hung up the phone. Getting out of bed he asked for his make-up artist to come and help him prepare as he had a press conference to make as he grieved the loss of a great pilot and his son.

The water rushed into my throat. My lungs were screaming in pain as I searched the water for Rachel, the stewardess. I saw her body floating a couple hundred meters away from me. She was not moving and seemed to be sinking into the ocean. I hurriedly swam over to her body and checked for a pulse. I felt a faint heartbeat as I held her small body in my arms. Searching for a life raft I found a piece of the wing from the jet. I immediately pushed her onto the wing. After I pulled myself onto the wing, I started giving Rachel CPR. It seemed like an eternity but eventually she finally came back, you could say. We sat there on the wing for a while staring at the dark blue sky, thinking what just happened. As the sun was setting the sky turned almost a blood red. "The irony," I thought as I searched for lights in the distance signifying land. I saw the flickers of lights way off in the distance and told Rachel we were going to have to paddle over there. Five hours later we were no closer then when we started. My muscles were throbbing with pain; even the training of the armed forces wasn't this hard. Rachel had fallen asleep hours ago. Looking down on her, a bruised and bloody mess, kept me going. I kept paddling though knowing we had to get to land, for I had a gash in my leg and was losing blood fast. Somewhere through that night I passed out. I awoke around mid-morning to the feeling of being stabbed in the leg. I looked up and saw Rachel cleaning my wound with some salt water. The pain shot through my body and I wanted to cry. Looking around searching to see where we had drifted to, I noticed land off to our north with a big building on it. I thought this must have been the lights I had seen. I worked with Rachel as we paddled towards land.

We reached the sun-bleached beach sometime in the afternoon. Rachel and I staggered up the beach and to the door of the first building we saw and knocked. Minutes later an older man opened up the big wooden door and asked how he could help us. I told him who I was and that I needed to use his phone. After hearing my name his mouth dropped. He ran me over to the TV and showed us the coverage of my crash. CNN was saying that a terrorist had blown up my plane in the Kublai hanger before I even lifted off. I stared in disbelief. For some reason my accident was being covered up. I couldn't understand it why would someone want to lie about the jet getting attacked. Then it struck me, I knew who had done this. It wasn't an attack from a hating nation but instead I was shot down by my father's pride.

Rachel and I made contact with a local fisherman who agreed to get us back to the mainland. We sat and waited gazing out at the sea. She looked at me her brown hair blowing in the wind and asked how my father could do this to me. I replied, "I don't know." When the fisherman arrived we got on the boat and headed towards the mainland. The boat ride was very choppy and I could not help myself from barfing into the sea. I might be an excellent pilot but I had no sea legs. After I thought I could stand no more we reached the mainland of the United States. I grabbed Rachel by the hand and told her to go to her parent's home and wait for me there. I hitched a ride with a passing motorist. After getting in I watched Rachel's body disappear into the distance thinking, "I could really marry this girl."

"Mr. President," someone said, "Mr. President." President Pace turned around from his cup of coffee. "Yes, how may I help you?" he asked. "Well sir," his aid said "your press conference is in an hour." "Thank you, I must get prepared," replied Pace as he walked into the Oval Office.

I had made it into Washington by midday. Turned out Rachel and I had crashed near Maine. I wore dark sunglasses and a trucker hat I had bought at a rundown gas station. I listened in on a couple's conversation in the middle of the National Mall. I heard that my father would be giving a press conference in an hour outside of the White House. I made my way on foot over to the White House and joined a crowd that was already waiting for the news conference. An hour later my father

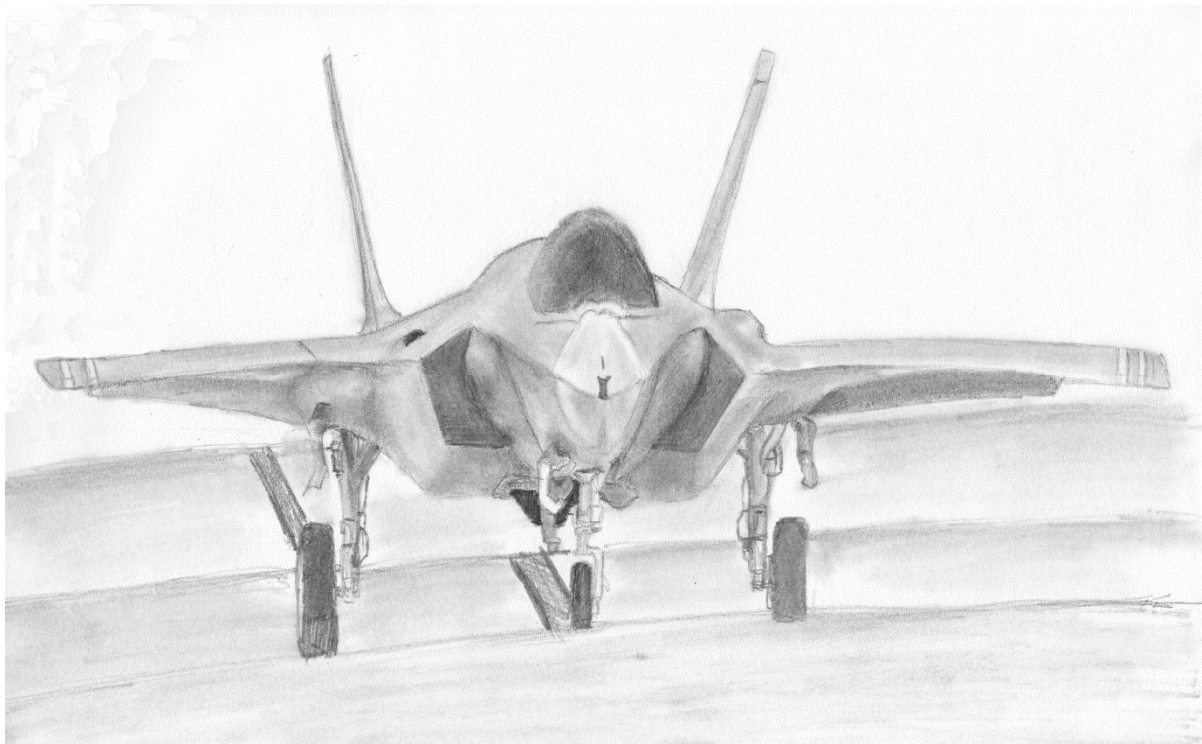
came out surrounded by his security forces. He started talking about the death of me, his son. My anger was building and I made my move. I sprinted up through the crowd pushing people to the side and jumped past the guards before they could react. I reached the podium and ripped off my disguise. “Hello, Father” I said “Remember me? Your son, and the one you tried to kill.” The crowd gasped.

My father was stammering to find words. “How?” he asked.

“I don’t know--” I replied but by that time the guards got to me and tackled me into the cheap plastic stage. After tackling me the guards grabbed my father and put him in handcuffs.

“What are you doing?” he screamed.

“Sir, you are under arrest for attempted murder,” one of them replied. After dragging away my father the guards helped me up and let me go. I had gotten revenge on my father but I still had one more thing to do. There had been one person who had gone through this whole incident with me and I had a promise to fulfill.



JET *pencil drawing by Jonathan Yung*

embroidery

in such a world fantastical,
themes and ideas are
resurrected

on the left breasts
of pre-school dwellers
and wannabe golf dads.

little men with polo sticks
happy whales
obtuse alligators

are all so close to
dollarbill hearts,
crucifix stand-ins.

after all,
who has a cross
embroidered on his chest?

by Cooper Henkel



JOKER KING
pencil drawing
by Thomas Ritter

cellphone

cellphone,
you are my tiled window
on the world.

no matter how much
i press my greasy cheek
i never
break through.

but that's alright
because our friendship is
a pipe dream

not unlike confiding
in the stillness of
trees and starry nights

by Cooper Henkel

Malevolence and Love

by Kiffen Loomis

He smashed into the shelves of his study and collapsed, knocking to the floor numerous volumes, the largest of which lay opened to the chapter titled "The Malevolence in Love." His scanty shadow, on the dark oak floor, accented his disheartened and distraught bodily expression, which displayed the candid truth of the situation. Arms dangling from their sockets, his disposition of sadness slowly developed into one of numbness, as if all emotion and feeling were being drained from his limp body. His eyes looked as if they were emptying into pits of endless despair, a response to his motive for living vanishing.

Wanting to witness each moment of his agony, she followed him into the study. Each second of desolation was closer to his conclusion. She pleased at this sight, her plan well executed. Her mind raced, although she desired that the essence of time might cease to extend her delight. She looked into his despondent pits and felt neither regret nor grief, exhilarating her intent to inflict even more suffering.

Pouncing on top of him, she whispered as though she had compassion, "You thought that I loved you... and it was a deep love; a love for your money. Burn in Hell, 'Monkey'," she said, mocking their loving nicknames.

He woke from his conscious state of numbness to the sound of his wife mocking their years together. "Why would you do this to me? I thought that we were happy together, that we were made for one another. I have spent the last three years of my life in love with you. Our time together really meant nothing to you?" He gasped for air, as his beloved's weight refused to let his lungs refill.

"Aside from the amenities of your wealth, the last three years of my life never existed in my mind. I can't even begin to believe that you were so naïve to think that I married you for some type of love that you thought we had. Why would a woman like me be genuinely in love with in an old scumbag like you?"

He still lay there speechless to his wife's admonitions. Shoulders curling, tongue slowly descending, he blocked out the outside world and lost all sentiment. His mind went further into a state of isolation. Closing his eyes, he released his final breath and let his will and purposes in life run away to his maker.

She was not done with him; her full satisfaction was not yet granted. Still on top of his now lifeless carcass, she placed her hands around his soft neck and—

She woke from her dream in a state of sheer panic, with fear and guilt battling to dominate her thoughts. Heart pounding, palms dripping with sweat, she wiped away the dry and lifeless sand that formed in the crevasses of her eyes, which felt as though she had unmasked even more guilt. "Why does this suddenly come back to haunt me? Why should I have to revisit my former life?" The guilt inside her began to boil and brought forth much discomfort and agony. "I have to admit my fault. I must tell him," she convinced herself. Although the night had reached into the early morning of the next day, her guilt refused to allow her to sleep.

Her eyes drifted to the other side of the bed, where her husband lay sleeping. His placid demeanor told the story of an innocent man who was unfathomably in love. With his genuine selflessness radiating off of his cratered face, she came to the realization that he did not deserve someone as malignant as she. He was worthy of much better; someone who had a faultless heart, cared only for him and made his life perfect in all respects.

The perfect recipient for the sinister plan, he was naïve enough to think that they were in love, old enough to feel compelled to rush his marriage, and wealthy enough to satisfy her motive. As they began to gain inner knowledge of one another, she realized his outstanding character and fell deeply in love. She let go of her original motive and never pondered the plan again, until now. She had grown to be a part of him, and he had grown to be a part of her. They were incomplete without each other and felt anguish when the other pained.

She gazed upon her sleeping spouse once again. Guilt rose from the depths of her stomach and felt as though it might spew out of her mouth. Her shame became too much; she could not wait until the morning to confess.

“Monkey, wake up,” she whispered in an audible, but deadened voice. He did not wake.

As any person feeling great guilt might imagine, she worried that he was to never awaken and that she would never have the opportunity to discard her remorse. She repeated with much sterner intonation, “Monkey, wake up! Monkey!” Fingers twitching, she leaned over and shook him with all of her strength, praying that he might wake.

He flinched as his eyes opened, consumed with the look of worry and concern. “Oh, it’s just you,” he assured himself. “Monkey, you know that I don’t have a good heart. Don’t do that to me again.”

“We need to talk.”

“Fine, let me put on my robe and meet you in the study,” He judged the seriousness of the situation from the tone of her voice and knew not to take the situation lightly.

“The study?” she questioned, as she felt the irony of the situation.

“Is something wrong? You’re never like this.”

“I’ll just tell you in the study.”

Taken aback by the seriousness that she displayed, he had never before seen this side of her and felt that she kept it from him. Since the beginning of their life together, he set forth the values of trust, honesty, and candidness as the strongholds of their marriage. He had always been completely honest with her and she, to the best of his knowledge, had always been honest with him.

Feeling rushed to meet the situation, he put on his robe and promptly shuffled to the study in the midst of the dark night. Joints swollen with guilt, she sat on the edge of her seat, rocking back and forth, exhibiting apprehension about what might come in the next minutes. The moonlight of the cold western North Carolinian April night glimmered through the panes of the window to write his shadow onto the scuffed oak floor.

He sat down and braced himself to be approached with what he foresaw to be devastating news. “What is going on?” he asked.

“You have no idea of the intensity of my love and care for you. You are the only thing in life that matters to me, and I would do anything for you,” she said trying to warm his heart before she admitted her fault. “When I realized how great a man you are and the loving heart that you have, I fell in love with you.”

“Monkey, I love you as well. You are the love of my life and are perfect for me. Can I now go back to—?”

“No, that it is not it, Monkey,” she said, cutting off his remark. “I have something extremely important to tell you that will not be pleasing to you and will bring no good to our relationship. It’s about something I planned... something I planned a long time ago, before I even met you.”

Goose bumps dotted his body as a flood of frigidness flushed throughout his body.



CAT

scratchboard drawing
by Alex Hudak

“I don’t know how to put this, monkey,” she said, exhaling. “I was twenty-eight years of age and possessed a very dark side. Egotistical and conceited, I was willing to sacrifice others’ happiness for my benefit. As you know, the abuse that I endured as a child has had a great impact on my life

and changed me, for the worse. Every night, my father would beat my mother in their bedroom, directly beside mine in the trailer. At first, I thought that I could stop him from beating my mom, but the scars show otherwise. I learned to block out everything in the world worry only about myself, which made me extremely selfish and morally unstable. I lost any and all sorts of principles and conscience.” She glanced upward to see him appraising every word for its relevant value.

“But none of this makes sense, you were perfect when I met you and are perfect now. You could never have been similar to that,” he said to assure himself that the story was not developing into something horrific.

“But I was that way, until I met you. You completed me and turned me into the woman you now love” she went on. “As I said, I was willing to do absolutely anything to satisfy my fleshly desires. At the time, I was in deep financial difficulties.” She stopped; embarrassed that she never told him of this part of her life in depth. “Everything that I had seemed to be taken away from me, including my sanity. In a panic to repair my damaged life, I developed a plan... a plan to—” she stopped and put her face in her hands and began to cry. A wave of warmth rushed throughout her body.

He foresaw what his wife might say and felt the outside of his now tense body exerting its strength on the inner core. This feeling resembled that of anger, but was much more severe. It was stronger and allowed no sympathy for her cries. This feeling never ceased to grow and began to warp his mind. Stronger and stronger this feeling became until he grabbed her hair and pulled with his meager strength. “Go on!” he demanded.

She saw his mood change and feared how he might react. She reluctantly pressed on, “My plan was to meet a wealthy man, lure him into falling in love with me and then marry him,” she stopped and then continued, in the hope of not making him any madder. “I would then file a large life insurance policy and... kill him,” she blurted. She bent down and wept out of humiliation and remorse.

He had not an idea how to react to her motive in marrying him. Was he to feel angry, disappointed, or betrayed? To these questions, he did not have answers, although it became clear that the last three years of his life were built on a false foundation, now crumbling beneath him. Utterly confused, he did not know what to say, think, or how to react.

She stood and walked the short, but seemingly endless way from her chair to his to comfort her husband. "What am I to say? What am I to do?" she asked herself.

"Monkey, are you okay?" No response was given. "I don't know what I can say to you besides the fact that I am sorry and I have changed, due to you." She sighed. "As I told you, a very dark side occupied my thoughts, but now I am different. Our life together is the only thing that matters to me."

He raised his head to find a presently unfamiliar and uncared for woman crying next to him. "How could she act as though she were feeling the agony and pain in this situation? She didn't hurt herself, she only hurt me," he thought. His anger rose, and his mouth went dry. An unfamiliar and bitter taste overwhelmed him; the taste of anger and infuriation. Adrenaline rushed throughout his body. He grabbed her from his sitting position in his chair and thrust her to the base of the shelves.

Her head hit the shelves of the study and began to bleed, after being flung like a worthless ragdoll. He lost all thought and sense of right and wrong, as if his acquired morals were depleted. Consumed with anger, he placed his hands around her petite neck and began to squeeze with all of his strength.

She flailed beneath him and tried to escape his hold. Her eyes began to lose a sense of emotion as she flailed and clawed at his hands. Skin tore from his hands as her nails sunk deeper and deeper, yet his grip remained steadfast. He felt tears drip from his chin as a faucet might when leaking its last drops. Not out of sadness or pain did he cry, but out of the infidelity he mourned. Squeezing with more and more strength, he continued to end her life. Her flails turned to simple movements, which turned to flinches, which turned to a state of silence. She was gone.

Seconds turned to minutes, which turned to tens of minutes, holding his firm grasp the entire duration. After his hands lost all feeling and aggression became sorrow, he released her.

He looked down and felt both shock and dismay concerning his act. He had just killed the happiness in life, a part of himself. Although their relationship began as a lie, which felt as though she betrayed him, one cannot abolish their love for someone in mere moments. He began to weep even more over the carcass of his beloved. Trying to assure himself that he had not ended her life, he began to shake her rapidly, yelling, "Wake up! Wake up! Please, don't do this to me. How could I do this? What have I done?" Now covered in her blood, he began to attempt every possible life saving attempt of which he knew, to no avail. He tried and tried again, wanting to bring her, a part of him, back to life.

She lay beneath him with the same expression of despair that she exhibited when her life was taken from her. After minutes of his attempt to bring her back, he submitted to the higher being that had taken her. Her claw marks and scratches covered his body. Her blood soaked his clothes. One could not deny that her soul now gone, never to return.

Disgusted with the unknown part of himself that erupted, he walked to his desk. He opened the highest drawer closest to the window and retrieved his Beretta 92FS handgun. "I have come, I have disappointed, and I shall leave," he said in the lifeless room. Putting the barrel into his mouth, a single shot was fired.

“Love Thyself”

by Jack Fleming

When the water cleared out of his face he saw the normally easy rapid, but different because of the water level. He has kayaked the Green before but has never paddled it at this level. There were fewer and fewer eddies to catch so if anyone flipped and swam it would be bad. He is an experienced kayaker though so he doesn't think about swimming too much. The Green River Narrows is a creek with many Class 5 rapids in a row, located in the beautiful mountains and gulleys of North Carolina.

Before Kris took the hike down to the put in he had to correspond with his wife so she could pick everyone up at the take-out. They would not see each other for a while.

Before they split up his wife said like every kayaking trip, “Be safe and have fun!”

When they got to the parking lot everyone unloaded all of their gear, dry suits and creekers, and hiked down. The weather was muggy and wet. Hazing, Creeping and cooling the mist rose from the water like a monster to attack its prey. The rhododendrons were curled up like they were covered by a blanket. They thought it would be better and a good challenge if they kayaked after a big rain. When they got to the patch of pine trees right near the water edge they noticed the water was higher than normal, just what they wanted. The friends always love a different and unique twist to the old rapids to keep them on their feet. It took them about 10 minutes or so to get their dry suits, pogies, booties and the rest of the gear fully on and snug. When they got into the water they all did a simple roll to get themselves woke up and ready. They were off to the first rapid, called Bride of Frankenstein. They went down one by one and caught some eddies on the way. Since the water was so high, some new and old eddies, holes, and drops appeared. When he went down the last drop water splashed in his face like he was washing it.

“That is the rush of kayaking, going into holes, stouting waterfalls, and when the water splashes in your face and you finally get to see what you ran, it's unbelievable,” one of his friends quoted.

The next rapid is their first, Class 5 rapid of the river, Frankenstein. To do this rapid the best way, boof the rock to the left after that paddle hard to the eddy to the left and avoid the big rock. All of the friends did this without a flaw. They all re-met at the bottom pool to catch up and remind others of the upcoming few rapids.

One of his friends stated, “You can get badly injured on Pincushion, but otherwise Whale Tail is fun.”

There was enough flow for the friends to take the alternate route on Pincushion that was more technical. Everyone was up for a challenge. Missing, gasping, and avoiding the rock, everyone didn't hit their heads, flip or even die. Most of the friends' favorite rapid is Scream Machine through Rapid Transit, but those are at least another hour or so down the river.

The next rapid is Boof or Consequences. Boof means the kayaker goes over or slides on a rock. The friends decided that the best line to do would be the 6 foot drop. The line they are taking involves hitting the boof rock at a 45 degree angle to avoid the rock that is blocking the falls. The waster was hitting the rock as if it was punching it. Once they boofed the rock they have to paddle hard left to avoid the undercut rock. One of the kayakers in the back did everything right but he hit the undercut rock a little bit.

This almost made him flip but he did a brace and rolled back up.

The next rapid the friends will encounter is very infamous for carnage and close fatalities. Go Left and Die, the name of the rapid, is because there is a log on the left side on the rapid that will catch you and keep you under if a kayaker is not careful. Also after the 6 foot drop in the middle of the rapid there is a very shallow hole on the left of the third pin rock. Splashing, the water snapped through the maze of rocks and logs wetting anything in its path.

After Boof and Consequences the friends all decided to run Go Left. They all let the first man have about two minutes of time before the next went. In the middle of the pack, Ryan, the most experienced kayaker out of all of them boofed the first rock, and hit the second pin rock directly which either will send him into the log, or down the falls. When he hit the rock he immediately leaned into it because of the water. He scooted back about one foot and then the water pushed him back over that falls.



FOOTPRINT *digital photo by Will Strothe*

When he went over the falls backwards the hole at the bottom pushed the stern end of his boat in between two rocks, the pin rock, and the waterfall. He was stuck rolling about 20 times until another friend came down, and threw him a throw rope and pulled him out. Once Ryan was out of his boat he immediately got his gear back on and started kayaking again. They all were relieved to all make it out of that alive, with some minor cuts though. The next rapid was fairly easy for all of them. Ryan, being a stud got over what happened and decided to do Zwick's backwards. Zwick's consists of a hole at the top of the rapid, a shallow rock slide into a small waterfall. The water was flowing so effortlessly like flowers in a vast field. Ryan easily made it through the top hole backwards. He started to slide down the rock and over the falls as if it was luck.

The next rapid was the one that had caused the first death on the river many years ago. All of the yakers know to not hit the pin rock sideways or at all. They all have to go to the right side of the rock to nearly miss it. Raging, eating, and waiting for a kayaker to mess up, Chief waited for the precise moment to snag anything and execute it underwater.

Kris has only done this rapid a couple times and does not like it at all. He does not like the rapid Chief because most of the water is pushing up against the pin rock. It is legend that the name of that rapid is Chief because Indians use to swim or kayak the whole river to show how brave they were. Apparently, one chief swam the river and died on that rapid, and that's how it got its name.

Kris was in the middle of all of his friends and went about 40 seconds after the guy before him. Kris was not thinking of the consequences if he did something wrong because kayakers need a lot of courage to run the good rivers and waterfalls. He turned the corner and saw the hole. He pointed his bow towards the line he needed to run so he didn't hit the pin rock. Kris went in the hole a little bit too sideways and when he poked his bow on the right of the pin rock it put him right in the middle of the "no release" hole. He got stuck in between the pin rock and the hole which made him unable to do his roll. Gushing, the powerful water locked him up like a prison. He was stuck underwater and in about four minutes he will die. His friends who were waiting at the pool below saw him in trouble

and called to the next kayaker to stop. But it was too late he was already kayaking down the line. And with Kris being in the hole it made it easier for the other guy just to boof off of Kris's boat to get through. But it didn't happen. The other kayaker's bow went directly under Kris's boat, actually hitting Kris in the face. But by doing that it dislodged Kris's boat and he is freed. Kris totally lost his breath and decided to walk out using the trail near the Nutcracker rapid. One other friend went with him while the other three continued down the most dangerous section of the river. The next few rapids are not that bad but all of them eventually lead to the 12+ foot waterfall, Gorilla. All of the friends met up at the only take out to portage Gorilla before they all decided to run it. Legs shaking and sweaty hands gripping the paddle, many of the newer kayakers were nervous but everyone ran Gorilla in the most perfect lines possible. Gorilla, gushing and big, sat stealthly around a corner waiting for someone to not notice. If someone didn't notice and tried to catch the eddy on the right river, they would be pulled down Gorilla backwards. Paddling hard, the determined kayakers launched off of the launch pad into the chute of Gorilla and into the huge hydraulic at the bottom. At worst the friends would get stuck in the hydraulic, but no one got hurt.

The next few waves and rapids are most of the kayakers favorite boogie sections. Some of the kayakers even hit some of the bigger waves and got some air. All of the friends turned out soaked at the bottom pool because they all crashed through so many waves.

Nutcracker, impossible to kayak without hitting many big rocks or a strainer, is going to be portaged because of the danger. The rest few miles of the river is very easy for the kayakers. It was just some little drops and holes, nothing a kayaker who knows how to roll couldn't handle.

Sadly, the next rapid is a 12 foot drop with a huge rock in the middle of the waterfalls pool at the bottom. That means all of the kayakers have to run the waterfall on a left or right line so no one will hit the staggering rock. One of the more experienced kayakers went first so he could get ready with the throw rope if something bad did happen. The next guy ran it flawlessly but hit a whirlpool at the bottom and had to brace. Next Bryce came around the corner to line away from the rock. But, the current pushed him towards the left side of the river and into an eddy. Suddenly, hands shaking vigorously and getting goosebumps, he was very terrified. The water pushed him out into the current and towards to dreadful rock. Turning his stern and powering forward he tried to out-paddle the swift current. He tried so hard but to no avail. He started to go off the waterfall backwards and hit the rock with brute force. His neck whiplashed and the back of his boat squished like a straw wrapper in water. His back had a huge gash in it from when his cockpit hit him. He also broke his spine in three places on his neck paralyzing him but the ultimate toll had occurred.

Watering eyes and hands shivering everyone watched as he floated downstream without his boat. One brave soul went to pick up his corpse and put it on the back of his boat. All of the other kayakers instinctively came down Sunshine without thinking of the risk to help. Some went to find his boat, or was what was left of it. Two guys found half of his boat, and some scraps from the collision. No one knew how to get him out of the deep gorge.

He died doing the sport he loved on one of the most infamous rivers in North Carolina. His family made a memorial on the river and his funeral was full of many kayakers he knew and kayakers that have heard of his experience, knowledge, and kindness. There is now a cross on the river made of his boats pieces, his paddle, and dogwood.

A hazy mist rose across the infamous river as kayakers still kayaked through its rocky canals and waterfalls. It is a major prop to kayak that river and give many people bragging rights. His friends and family remember that bad day. The day when the rapid Sunshine sunset someone's life.

I.a.
even we
English roses
can enjoy the

dry, perspirant
sun
of Hollywood

(see:
sand steps
guitars
fire pits)

because even we
can't have "too much
of a good thing"

(see:
iced macchiatos
shoplifted sunglasses
fast cars, top down),
right?

by Cooper Henkel

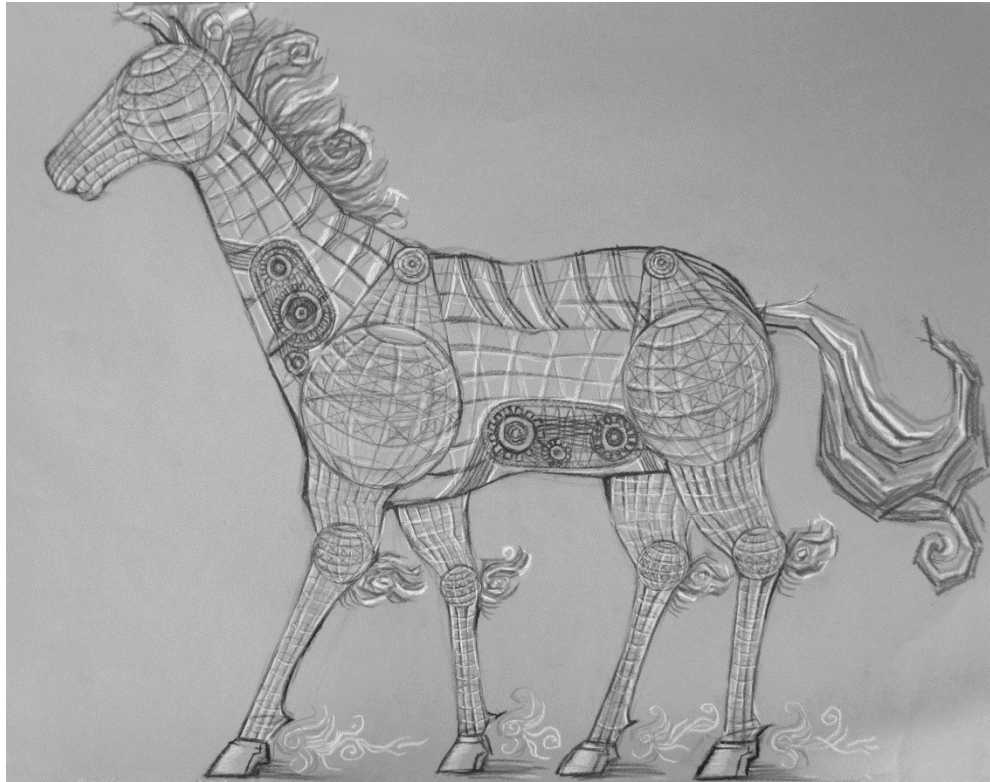
CITY ink drawing by Chandler Ding



IRON HORSE

*pastel and charcoal
drawing*

by Chandler Ding



The Hitchhiker

by Graham Lail

The taste of dust from cars leaving me behind was nothing I wasn't used to. Although, I had learned that if I were patient enough, someone with a kind heart, or maybe someone who had been in my situation before, would stop for me. The car was usually cramped, with just enough room for me to squeeze in, but no matter how the ride was; I got to where I was going eventually.

I had been walking for about two hours, but I could not be sure because I had no watch. The sun was beating like a drum on my back and I was a distant four hours from my destination by foot. My crackled thumb was beginning to ache and my throat was crying for water, so I decided to stop for a brief second and quench my thirst. I found a comfortable spot, cool and shady from an oak tree that was right above me. I watched the cars whizz by, shiny from the reflection of the sun.

At first I thought I was hallucinating. A 2005 Camaro, with a fresh paint job and leather interior had pulled up to my spot. Whoever owned this car took great care of it. The people in it seemed to be the exact opposite from the well-kept car. There were two guys, both had scruffy beards, ripped clothes, and missing teeth; the typical homeless man. I had my suspicions on how they came to acquire such an exuberant car, but when you're hitchhiking you never turn down a ride, especially one this nice. They gestured for me to hop in and I sprang to my feet, gladly relieved that I was finally able to feel the small breeze of air conditioning brush against my hot and dry face. They asked me where I was going, I replied, "about 25 miles down the road." "Well, we'll go wherever you're headed," one of the occupants said. I thought to myself, why are they following my route?

Strange. “Where did you get this car?” I asked, trying not to be too blunt. “Don’t worry about man”, one replied. “It’s just something we borrowed...from a friend,” the other one answered suspiciously. That’s when I realized what was going on. It was a stolen car. “Pull over now and let me out!” I shouted with a voice rough from anger.

Just then sirens started to blast. I turned around and saw two state troopers trailing us, like a cheetah pursuing its prey. This is bad, very bad I thought to myself. I had a history of stealing cars. It was how I made my money for years, and it was not until a couple months ago that I decided to give up going against the law and find work. That’s where I was headed then, my uncle had promised me a job at his garage if I stayed out of trouble. That job was in jeopardy now, plus if I got caught being associated with grand theft auto again, I would be spending serious jail time. There was no way the cops would believe my story with the history that I had.

“Gas it!” I screamed. With hands shaking of fear, the driver expertly weaved through cars reaching speeds over 100 miles per hour. We could faintly see, off in the distance, that the police had set up a roadblock. We were just seconds away from a devastating impact, when the driver of the car swerved off the road and into the other lane. The discombobulated cops went flying in the other direction. It looked as if we had evaded the police. My adrenaline was pumping, and my heart was beating. I was thanking god I was still alive.

After all the commotion had passed, I began to smell something resembling to a rotting cow arise from the back seat. I was too ecstatic that we had escaped the police to think anything of it. But my hopes of avoiding the law were dashed minutes later when another roadblock appeared in the distance. We were done for. The seconds before the impact slowed down to minutes, my whole life flashed before my eyes. We crashed the roadblock around 80 miles an hour, thrashing and banging my head all around the car. I was somehow relatively unharmed, but the driver lay dead on the steering wheel and the occupant in the passenger seat appeared severely injured for he was coughing up blood. The police, armed and ready, surrounded the car and dragged the three of us out. They fastened the cold, painful handcuffs onto my hands and put the other two on stretchers. They opened up the trunk, and my fears had become a thousand times worse. Out of the trunk they pulled a male corpse, missing an arm and both legs. I was speechless. My life was finally beginning to get on track, but now I knew I was headed to jail.

When I got to the station they immediately isolated me for questioning. With one suspect dead and the other one in critical condition, I was the only one who the police force thought would hold the answer to this mystery that I knew nothing about. They drilled me with questions which I had no clue how to answer. The interrogators could see the color drain out of my face. They lost patience with me when I did not reply, and after 13 long hours of interrogation, I was sent to my cell. The cells were dark and depressing, draining every ounce of hope out of you. I had been in this exact prison before so I knew the rules and how things worked. I just never thought I would be back.

After a couple of days in jail, I saw a glimpse of a TV. “Breaking News, serial killer Michael Edge has made a miraculous recovery and escaped from the hospital. He is wanted for Grand Theft Auto, and multiple homicides.”

I recognized this guy as the passenger. The Reporter continued to say “The accomplice in these murders has been killed in a car accident while running from the police, but another suspect has been discovered and is now in custody. They showed a picture of my face.

A month later, through a unanimous decision, I was found guilty of murder. Later that day I was listed on death row.

Yerik

by Noah Downman

His name was Yerik. Yerik Volkonskij, but in actuality, his name was Ronnie Jacobs. He was part of the 3rd armored division of the army and was on a very secretive and undercover plot to infiltrate and overthrow the merciless Czechoslovakian Communist Party in hope of ending USSR's communist reign.

The date was December 5, 1989. Suddenly, Ronnie heard the general yelling, "This is not a drill, now get your asses up and get into the chopper!" Though his eyes red and his mind foggy, his years of intense military training kicked in and immediately he arose, quickly got his green and black uniform on, and ran to board the buzzing and whipping chopper. Once his team was all aboard the chopper, they sailed through the air with their guns at the ready. He had been waiting the last few weeks for this moment, and it was finally here. He was ready to take out Gustáv Husák, the fearless and powerful leader of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party. Their chopper landed in the outskirts of Měchenice, Czechoslovakia, approximately 16 kilometers from their final destination--Prague, Czechoslovakia.

They landed in a beautiful, glistening green meadow in the middle of a forest. Immediately, their general threw Russian civilian clothes to them in order to help them blend in. After 25 agonizing minutes of walking, the outskirts of Měchenice finally came into view. They were on V Luhu rd., and continued on until they could see the city of Měchenice. The paved roads and houses were glistening in the morning dew. People were going to work, and kids, playing and gossiping, made their way to school. The city looked like any normal city in the United States, except for the fact that all the signs were in Czech. The troop proceeded to the glistening, flowing Vltava River to sail to Prague.

As they were traveling, a Russian soldier came to them and asked to see their papers. When the general gave them the clothes, he also provided them with the correct false identification papers to get to the river. Unknown to the troop, the work papers were wrong, so the soldier began shouting "Američané! Američané! Přišli převzít" (Americans! Americans! They have come to take over). Out of nowhere, Czechoslovakian troops came out with their CZ-52 handguns drawn, aimed at their heads. The Czechoslovakian general asked: "Jak jste se sem dostal? Proč jste tady? (How have you gotten here? Why are you here?). The American general answered with: "Nejsme americké, ale čs. Můžeme dokonce ukázat doklady, pokud musíme" (we are not American, but are Czechoslovakian. We can even show you the papers if we must). The Czech general replied: "Pokud tě najdu ležet, budeme okamžitě zastřelit hodně" (if I find you to be lying, we will immediately shoot you). The US general showed them his ID, and so did the rest of the troop. Finding these papers satisfactory, the Czech troops told them to get lost and prodded them with their pistols until they left.

The troop may have been slightly jumbled from this encounter, but at least they still had their lives. After about another 40 minutes of walking, and a few other searches by the Czech troops, they finally made it to the river. The boat was a 1989 Sunbird 21'8 Cruiser Cuddy Speedboat. The keys were hidden under the driver's seat, so the troop cast off from the dock after only a few minutes. After a few hours, the city of Prague came into view. Up ahead, they saw a police checkpoint, so they readied the papers for their boat and for the authorization of entering the city. Once they approached the shining city, their boat was pulled over and searched. This time, there were no mistakes with the authorization papers, so after only a few minutes, they were through the checkpoint without any conflict, or that's what they thought...

After only a few minutes, they heard sirens, and four speeding military boats were on their tails. Heavy gunfire, pinging and popping, was falling upon them so they found there was no way to solve this peacefully. The boat was ready with weapons just for this reason, and now they came in handy. The trained US military personnel quickly had the enemy boats sunk, but were not unscathed. Ronnie was shot in the leg.

The wound was deep with dark red oozing out, soaking his clothes. To stop the bleeding, the troop applied gauze and pressure. Once the bleeding had subsided, they found the wound wasn't bad enough to deprive him from completing the mission, so they pressed on. The whole way to the capital building, there was a ton of commotion due to the firefight that had just gone on. As if by magic, the troop was unnoticed and easily crept in towards the capital building.

After a matter of minutes, they were there. The prize, elegant and beautiful, and just a few hundred paces ahead of them, but there was one problem: the building was surrounded by troops. "The gunfire must've scared them. They must know their leader is about to be killed," thought Ronnie. Now, without a clue of how to get in, the troop needed an idea. Out of the blue, an old beggar, hair unkempt and clothes ragged, pulled on Ronnie's sleeve and asked them if they were American soldiers. Of course Ronnie replied no, but the beggar said that he knew that he was, so Ronnie gave way and told him he was. The beggar then said "It's okay. Your secret is safe with me." This surprised Ronnie that the man knew English, and he didn't know that he would keep the secret and not turn him in. The beggar then revealed something even more surprising: he knew of a secret tunnel into the capital building.

The beggar led the troop to a statue in front of the building and moved a panel on the statue, revealing a tunnel. The tunnel was dark and smelled of mildew. The beggar had left them in the tunnel and closed the door behind them so no one discovered the tunnel or the troop. After about 30 minutes of walking in the pitch black darkness, the tunnel ended, and when they felt the ceiling, there was a small handle. When they pulled down on the handle, a small section of the ceiling swung down, revealing a broom closet in the capital building.

Upon climbing out of the hole, their general opened a duffel bag he was carrying and pulled out several dress suits and told them to put them on. Before leaving the closet, they put their ears up to the door to listen for anyone who might be nearby. Once the other side of the door was silent, they cautiously exited. They were in a long hall. They then proceeded to find the communist leader.

At the end of the hall, there was an elevator, which conveniently had a map next to it. Using the map, they found the leader's office to be on the top floor--seven floors up.

The troop packed into the elevator and hit the "7" button. When the elevator opened, they found it to be just one big hall, at the end of which was a door with the name "Gustáv Husák" painted in gold lettering on the door.

Ronnie thought to himself, "This is it. The day we take down communism. Now is the time we either kill or be killed, and I'm ready for it." The team rushed down the hall with their machine guns at the ready. They stormed into the room, but there was no one there. Out of the corner of his eye, Ronnie noticed a small trap door. He then cautiously walked over to it and slowly opened it with his gun ready to kill. What he found in it was Gustáv Husák cowering in a hole with a pistol sitting next to him. Ronnie then thought to himself, "I guess he hasn't noticed me because he doesn't have his pistol aimed at me." Wanting it to be fair, he knocked on the floor and Gustáv looked up and grabbed his pistol. The general yelled for Ronnie to shoot, but everything went dark.

What Goes Around Comes Around

by Reid Motter

It was a November day in western North Carolina. Joe had just gotten off of work for the day and was rain soaked and cold to the bone. Despite the gloomy weather he was excited to go meet up with his buddies for a night of Monday Night Football and drinks. Squeezing and ducking, Joe fought to get in the truck. Despite his large stature and size he finally got into the small cab. Ringing loudly, vibrating strongly, his phone went off. He looked down at the scratched and grime-covered screen to see that his wife, Linda, calling. Hesitating a moment, he put the phone up to his ear and answered the call with an unenergetic “Hey honey, how are you doing.”

Linda replied, “I’m doing great. I figured that you would be getting off work just about now and seems I was right. I was wondering what you wanted to do for dinner tonight?”

“I thought I had told you I was going out with the guys tonight. We were going down to the bar for the game.”

“What? You practically spent the whole weekend with your friends. Can you not give me a few hours of attention? For God’s sake Joe I’m your wife!”

“We’ve had this discussion fifty million times. Almost every night I come home and spend time with you. You never seem to remember the times I am there, only when I’m not. Wait... What’s that guys? Well, look Honey I got to go but I love you okay.”

“Huuuh, I love you too.”

Smelling of booze and sweat, the bar reeked. The walls, decorated with neon signs that lacked most of the letters, accented the rundown atmosphere of the bar. Four guys sat in the corner, drinking beer, snacking on chips. The men talked about everything from weather to the price of gas. Then eventually women came up as it always did. “So Joe how’s that wife of yours doin’?”

“She’s alright, I mean a great woman. But sometimes I wonder if we are really meant for each other. It just seems that we can never agree on anything. And she’s constantly upset with me. It’s I can’t do anything right. Like tonight she got all worked up because I was comin’ out here with y’all. I’m the one who goes out and works everyday in order to bring a paycheck home to her. You would think that I deserve a free night once and a while.”

“Well how long have you been married--what is it seven years now. Have you considered renewing y’all’s vows. It seemed to work for me and the old lady. Erased any doubts we had about each other. If I was you I would think about. I mean what you got to lose. Worst case scenario it doesn’t work and y’all split up and go your separate ways.”

“I don’t know man. Can you really fix something that never worked. I just keep thinking to myself, do I really want this? Well, whatever let’s not ruin a good night with this trash.”

Propped up on cinder blocks, his trailer sat up on a small hill. Pulling into the dirt driveway Joe knew Linda was not going to be happy. Startled by the knock on the door, Linda dropped her glass of water. “Who’s there?” she quickly answered.

“Hey baby it’s me, Joe.”

“Oh hey be there in a second. Damn it. We need to get this stupid deadbolt fixed. It always gets stuck.” Struggling with the deadbolt for a moment Linda, a strong woman for her size, jerked it free. “Finally, its freezing out there Linda. Trying to *hiccup* kill me or something?”

“No why would I do that?”

“You know why.”

“Are you drunk Joe?”

“Maybe... So what if I am. It doesn't change nothin'.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Oh you know all too well *hiccup* exactly what I'm talking about.”

“No I don't, care to explain?”

“We can't stand each other. We hate each other's guts. And I'm through with it. Let's just cut the crap, I want to leave. I want you out by tomorrow noon.”

“What! Look, you're not yourself. This isn't the best time to have the conversation. Why don't you just go to bed and we talk about this like adults tomorrow morning.”

“No, this is the most like me I've been in a long time. I've decided, I want you out of my house. For good. I want tomorrow to be the last time I ever see you. Ever.”

“You can't just do this to me. You can't just throw me out into the streets. Where am I supposed to live? What am I supposed to eat? This isn't just your house you know, it's mine too.”

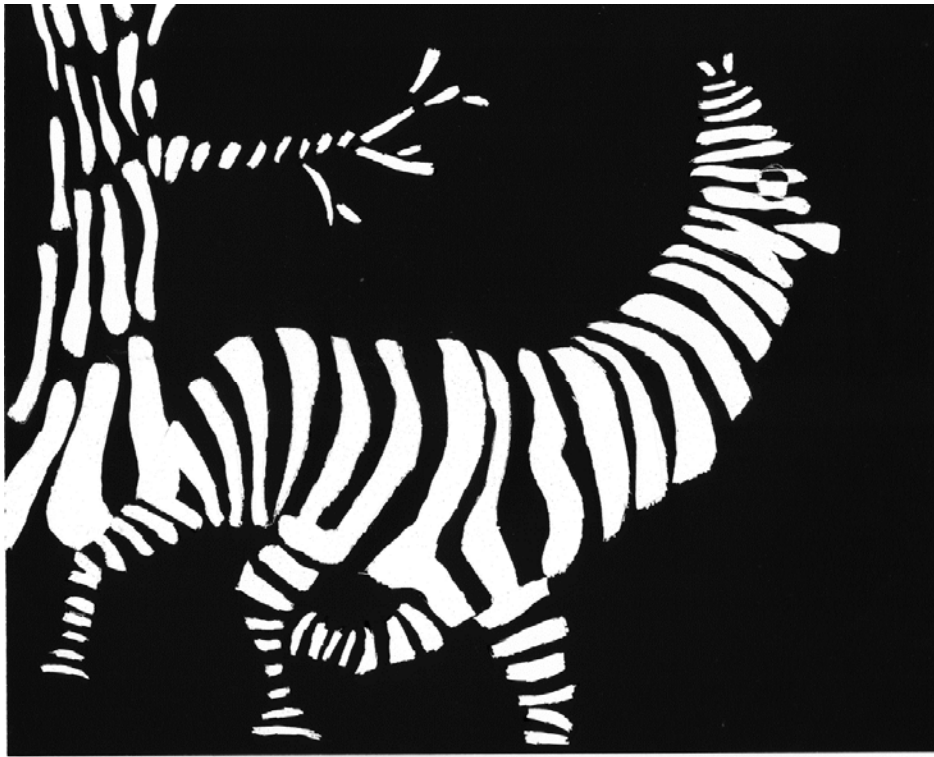
“Actually the deed is in my name so it is all mine.” The shock on her face was obvious. She was short for words. “Well then it's settled you'll be gone tomorrow.” And with that he went to bed.

Linda, who was not a big crier, sat on the couch sobbing wondering what had brought this about. She knew what he said was true about them not liking each other but she wondered what had sparked the idea of throwing her out. She considered all her options. None of them seemed to play out any better than the previous. Then an idea hit her. But no, she thought to herself I could never. The more she thought about it seemed to be the only way she could see. “Even if I could,” she said to herself, “how would I?” Reading the paper the other day, she had come across a story about a house blowing up after a gas pipe broke. She figured it wouldn't be that hard to fake. Let the gas pipe leak then light the stove and it would be a ticking time bomb.

Waiting, puffing a cigarette, Linda stood outside the home. She figured it would take a good five minutes for the gas to reach the flames. She knew her husband had life insurance through his job so she would be able to get by until she found decent job, or even better a decent husband. She saw in her mind what her new life would be like. Suddenly, an explosion occurred, shrapnel and fire flew everywhere. The house, a burning lump of metal, almost completely disappeared.

Searing pain ran through her entire left side, then it all went black. She woke up in a hospital dazed and confused, her mind clouded by pain killers. She drifted in and out of consciousness for almost two days until she finally woke for good. She realized the sheer number of tubes and wires coming and going from her body. It scared her. She began to struggle and realized she could not feel her left side. As soon as she looked down and saw what had happened to her she went into shock.

Linda's left side was completely bandaged. Upon closer examination it became obvious that she had almost no skin left on the left of her body. As she tried to recall what had happened the doctor walked in and knelt down next to the bed and spoke softly. He told her that her house had blown up and her husband had miraculously survived. She was thought dead at the scene but luckily the paramedics had been able to revive Linda on the way to the hospital. That was four days ago. Since then she had been on a respirator and IV and had to be watched around the clock. They had already started few of many skin grafts needed to try and repair her damaged body. The doctor informed her that most of the muscle in her left side had burned off and that there was little hope she would be able to walk on her own or use her left arm ever again. Once the doctor was gone she drifted into a half awake half asleep state. She pondered what would become of her. She felt very uncertain and scared. As she gave way to the darkness she grinned to herself and thought, *Karma's a bitch*.



STRIPES

scratchboard drawing
by Sam Grabenstein

The Redemption of a Lifetime

by Julian Taylor

‘This is ridiculous. Why can’t I just do this?’ He thought to himself, his nagging conscious had almost become unbearable at this stage in his life. His mental state, having been stressed for too long, started to take a toll on his personal life. He could no longer communicate with his own children and he hadn’t seen his own brother in weeks. His close family had started to notice the recent decline in his social life as the mental stress and pain over something so little had finally started its possible final lash of guilt.

“I can’t keep doing this too myself,” he thought as he got up from his chair as if he was somehow stuck to it, “This ordeal ends today.” He walked into his room and prepared himself for a shower as he reflected back on what had occurred on March 14th, 1943. It was a normal day, slow and dull, at the local J.C. Penney. The usual boredom from the workers filled the air with an almost palpable social dryness. The co-workers didn’t get along, the boss was nosy, and the department store was a waste of money for the company to keep it in Siler. He walked in and immediately went to the back aisle, ignoring everyone on the way there, just as he had planned. He took a look around and quickly checked his pockets.

The open switchblade knife, sharpened and armed, was ready to go. He quickly drew the knife and ran down the aisle, slashing everything in his path like an aspiring explorer through a perpetual line of canopy. Then, as his fit soon ended, he took another glance around, no one had noticed. It seemed as if God wanted him to rob the store today. He then simply knocked over one

vertical Rolodex of clothing and rushed away. A store attendant calmly paced himself over and saw the Rolodex and picked it up. But as he was midway through picking up the old, out-of-style clothing he noticed the first damage, a pair of jeans looking as if they had just come back from Europe. He quickly called his supervisor over, who then called over more attendants to see if all of the clothing had been damaged.

This was his only chance, and he was well aware. Emerging from his temporary hiding spot burrowed three aisles down from his slashing fit, he rushed over to the cash register quickly drew his switchblade again and stated in a hushed tone, "Give me what's in there now!"

The cashier was frightened out of her mind. Eyes began to water and her voice started to tremble as she was communicating with the soon-to-be wanted felon. Her shaking hands slowly opened the cash register and handed him what was in there. A bomb set to release thousands of mental butterflies went off in his seemingly bottomless stomach. He realized he had gotten lucky in choosing the easiest cashier and register to rob, but on the contrary had the least amount of money. But he knew this wasn't the time to get picky, he grabbed the money and took off out the door before any of the other attendants even noticed.

He quickly came back to the present time. He had spaced out for nearly 25 minutes in his shower. He realized it was finally time, this mental torture ended today. He drove in his car nervously listening to NPR and still reminiscing about the day. The drive lasted only eight minutes, exactly, but he felt like he was in his car for generations.

There it was, the J.C Penney he had so fatefully robbed 78 years ago to the day. He entered the store and quickly felt out of place. The place had nearly quadrupled in size since his last "visit." He had never really conceived the idea of J.C. Penney becoming successful, nor had he predicted the U.S. winning World War II, so his predictions from the era were very off. As he walked into the store, a younger woman approached him, startling him before she sputtered out, "Hello sir, is there anything I can help you with today?"

He responded "Yes, there is. Is there any of this store that has been preserved since the 1940s?"

She looked at him puzzled and replied, "Sir, we rebuilt this establishment nearly 15 years ago. But I can provide some assistance on this business' history if you would like that?"

"No, thank you for offering though, young lady. I think I can make my own way around. Thank you." As soon as the younger worker walked away, he had realized how out of his element and modern society he had grown. But this too was just more motivation to do what had to be done. He looked for a register that was unoccupied. He spotted one with a young lady seeming similar to the young lady he had robbed so long ago.

He walked up carefully, to not set off any alarm within the cashier and spoke, "Ma'am, 78 years ago on this day I wrongfully took money from this store. I held the helpless young emotional cashier at knifepoint and ordered the money from the cash register. I now return this money, with interest, back to this great company."

Even more puzzled then the first attendant, the woman responded, "Sir, not only can I not trust you, but we cannot accept this money." His heart sank but his goal had not been achieved and he was not leaving a failure. He simply stared at the cashier, placed the money on the conveyor belt, and said, "Help someone with this, as much I helped myself today."

He left the register walked out through the dreary glass doors into a brighter and sunny day. For finally, his mind could be at peace.

The Daring Mission

by Davey Arroyo III

“Captain Reynolds, you and your sergeant need to get to the briefing room and prepare for a rescue mission in Laos,” said the general.

“Yes sir!” said Captain Reynolds.

Captain Jonathan Reynolds, a tall man with stern blue eyes, is about to leave the Navy after 14 years of service. He is finally given a mission, after a year of just sitting at the base. He accepts a mission to travel to Vietnam. His partner, Sergeant James Allen, is a young man of wisdom with dark brown eyes and an excellent sniper. He originally started as a sergeant of the sniping team.

Their mission is to rescue a valuable informant by the name of Nguyen. Nguyen is a cold-blooded Vietnamese war criminal who has top secret information about the positions of the Viet Cong and their leader.

“Alright, here is the plan for this rescue mission,” says Captain Reynolds. “You, Allen, will be providin’ me with thermal sniper support from this hill. I’ll move in to the last known location of the target. Eventually, you and I will meet at rally right between the hill and the informant’s location; it should be a quick rescue if neither of us gets into contact with the tingos who should be sleeping around this time. Are you ready for this *daring mission*?”

“Yes sir, but will we be keeping touch by radio?” asks Sgt. Allen

“Yes, but we’ll have to keep to very little communication--only important information.” Capt. Reynolds informs him.

With the nod of Sgt. Allen’s head, the debriefing finishes and they leave in 0500 hours. Sgt. Allen is given an L96A1 silenced thermal scoped sniper rifle (his favorite of all). While he gets what he wants Capt. Reynolds, gifted to him by his former squad leader, uses his Commando Assault Rifle with a silencer, red dot sight, and extended magazines. Their transportation will be through the air so they’re now to become paratroopers. With the cover of the night they have the perfect chance to make it to their correct destination.

“Two minutes!” yells the pilot

“Two minutes!” Sgt. Allen and Capt. Reynolds respond in unison.

This was the correct response that told the passengers how much time they had to take the jump out of the plane to fall 1200 feet from the plane to the surface. They stand up, look at each other and jump out of the plane and begin to fall. As they fall they noticed that the hill, now retaken by the VC, causing a major problem for the plan to go right.

“Damn it!” Capt. Reynolds says.

“Yeah, lucky enough we have dark colored parachutes.” Sgt. Allen replies.

“That is true but it is going to take us longer to complete the mission,” Capt. Reynolds notes.

Sgt. Allen nods his head and they begin to flare their parachutes to brace themselves for landing. Normally, they would split apart but they have to retake the hill together. As they head up the hill, they hear fire crackling, Vietnamese language, and a man screaming in pain. Capt. Reynolds and Sgt. Allen continue to walk up the hill and they notice that the man wasn’t their target but another Vietnamese war criminal. Capt. Reynolds begins to fire his gun at every tango in his sight. Although this rescued man was not their main target, he does know a way to get to Nguyen without dealing with any VC. Capt. Reynolds has Sgt. Allen stay on the hill as planned.



BAMBOO pencil and ink drawing by Vincent Li

As Reynolds and the man are walking through the forest, tree-filled and quiet, they notice something moving in the bushes and Captain Reynolds hands the man a silenced pistol. As they are alert, the thing that is moving stops and walks towards them. That thing turns out to be their target man. But as soon as they find him they are attacked by a group of ten VC bandits and they instantly find strong and large protection behind a rock.

Captain Reynolds radios to Sgt. Allen and says, “We need the support, sergeant. I have the target with me. I need you now!”

“Yes sir!” replies Sgt. Allen.

Instantly, with his gun kicking back and the bullet speeding forward, Sgt. Allen knocks down foes one by one with rapid speed. Then Reynolds moves from cover and advances towards the enemy. He and Allen is going. He is taking down tangeros as well as Allen. Once they reach the rally point, Allen calls for an immediate extraction. They’re getting into the helicopter and still shooting at the tangeros. They are on the helicopter and they notice that Capt. Reynolds holding his side and bleeding vigorously from a gunshot wound. Sgt. Allen, in a panic, begins to put pressure on the wound to stop the bleeding.

They’re only a mile away and there is instantaneous help with the injury.

A few years later at the medals ceremony the general is giving a speech. “You all know about the daring mission and the men that were in that mission are here today. These men are now known as Colonel Jonathan Reynolds and Captain James Allen. Could you guys please join me up on the stage?” The two men join him on the stage and the General continues to talk, “These men are the recipients of the Medal of Honor, the highest rewarding medal in the military.”

After the applause ends, they go back to their seats as proud Navy SEALs, who have been a part of the global force for good.

Death of "der König Heinrich"

Matthew A. Betts

"Fall in," said First Lieutenant Bertinelli. It had been three days since we hit the beaches. I watched more than two full platoons be devoured by the darkened beast that is the ocean. I seem not to be able to forget the day.

As we hit the beaches at 0630 the machine gun fire, chopping up the beaches and cutting through the water, created the image of the ocean reaching out and grabbing our soldiers. The evil nature of these cold hands appeared to be pulling them under water towards the deep, cold ocean floor. As the ramp to our Higgins boat was let down, I stood watching in horror as the men at the front of the boat jerked as the bullets hit their bodies. I was frozen in terror as I was listening to men and boys scream for their mothers and wives. Soldiers in the back prayed for god to not let them die as their fellow comrades drifted lifeless in the red tainted, cold ocean. You could smell the charring stench of burning flesh as Stuka dive bombers made waste of the American marines in the boats behind us. I had learned the true meaning of "Entering The Gates Of Hell". I felt blood spraying onto my clothes and face as the men in front of me were wasted. In the middle of all this carnage, I prayed. "Lord help me make it though this, angels protect me in the name of Jesus, amen". At that moment, I went over the side of the bullet stricken boat, and fell into the choppy ocean. Bullets ripped through the air piercing fiercely into the water. As men tried to swim to the shore, they were butchered by the Nazi Messerschmitt fighter planes strafing the water. I was in the water for maybe ten seconds, but it felt like an eternity. When my feet touched the sand, I was overjoyed to be on the beach. I looked back to the water and saw bodies floating, but I kept moving as I tried to get the images of burning flesh out of my mind. I was just about to link up with the remainder of my squad when a mortar landed right on top of them, ten or eleven feet from me. The men that were there three seconds ago were no more. All that was left was parts of a helmet, a puddle of blood and torn off flesh. I remembered talking to those same men about what they were going to do when they got home. One of the soldiers was married and had a little girl, I remember seeing the picture of his three year old daughter and him in a rocking chair. He was telling me he couldn't wait to be on leave to go home and see them again. Another soldier left behind a kid brother and when he got home, he was going to start a hardware store. I felt as if right then hell was trying to say "there was no way out". I was dazed for a couple of seconds, as I felt the sense of hopelessness come over me. I felt my eyes tearing up but I had to keep moving. I pulled out my Thompson M1 and fired a couple of rounds at the German pillboxes while trying to get to the sea wall. The sea wall was crowded but my body was protected and I was dug in. We had some marine engineers place Bangalore torpedo charges in the barbed wire. When the charge went off, the wire was removed. At that time, one hundred or so bloodthirsty marines, who had lost brothers and friends, charged and flanked the German pillboxes. There was a bunker that was keeping one of the many platoons pinned down, so I slipped in behind it and rolled a grenade inside. "Granate, erhalten unten!" is all I heard before the explosion. Then from inside the pillbox I heard a voice "Fridrick"? "Fridrick waren sind Sie"? Then I heard crying, that kraut must have found Fridrick. Then I heard two gunshots coming from inside the bunker. I crouched, and moved in with caution. It was no ambush, Fridrick's friend had put Fridrick and himself out of their misery with two lead bullets. As I stepped out of the pillbox I looked along the beach, riddled with bullets and splattered with flesh, dead American marines laid cold as the grey sky parted to allow the golden rays of sunshine to hit the beach and severed bodies. Scattered among them were medics and

field hospital surgeons. Some were picking up dog tags and others were searching for where they could be of great assistance to save a soldier's life. At that moment I just cried and thanked god for getting me through my first taste of hell. I could see this was going to be an long, grueling day as I was merely in the eye of the storm.

"Gunnery Sergeant Johnson.....". "Gunnery Sergeant Johnson!!! Pay attention"! said First Lieutenant Bertinelli.

"Sir, yes sir! Sorry sir!" I said

"I don't want your apology, son. I want you and your savage, bloodthirsty guts to go out there and bag me some krauts."

A Corporal ran up to the First Lieutenant and handed him a slip of paper. "Gunnery Sergeant Johnson, you need to report to the Colonel's office for special orders," said First Lieutenant Bertinelli.

"Sir yes sir" I said. I walked from the battalion in the field past the mess hall to the Colonel's office. "Sir you wanted to see me," I said.

"Yes, sergeant, sit down" The Colonel responded in a calm voice. "I was informed that you would be dropped deep behind enemy lines in Germany, Berlin to be exact, for the assassination of "Der König Heinrich" better known as Heinrich Himmler, Chief of German Secret Police in the Reich Ministry."

"Yes sir, but why me sir?" I said confused yet excited about a new challenge.

"You are the best in your battalion, being that you are the only surviving member of your battalion." said Colonel Holbrook. "Heinrich has an allotment of ideas to offer the German SS. He is bright yet sadistic. We need him out of the way before more of those demented ideas get out and you are the man to do it".

I was bound for Berlin, to be dropped in at 0500 and the assassination to be done by 0800 exactly.

As I prepared for my next mission I said goodbye to my squad and named a new squadron leader. I wasn't too sure that I would be coming back. I was a one man army at this point and would have to fight for my life. I went and got strapped up with my gear, then headed to the plane.

As we got into Berlin airspace, we started catching flack from everywhere. At about 0455 the plane was catching lots of flack and the pilot told me I would have to jump. Nervous and anxious, I hooked the ripcord to the fifty foot cable that is strung up through the top of the glider.

"Wait for the green light, and always keep your .45 fully loaded, it could save your life," yelled the pilot in a stern, unshaken voice.

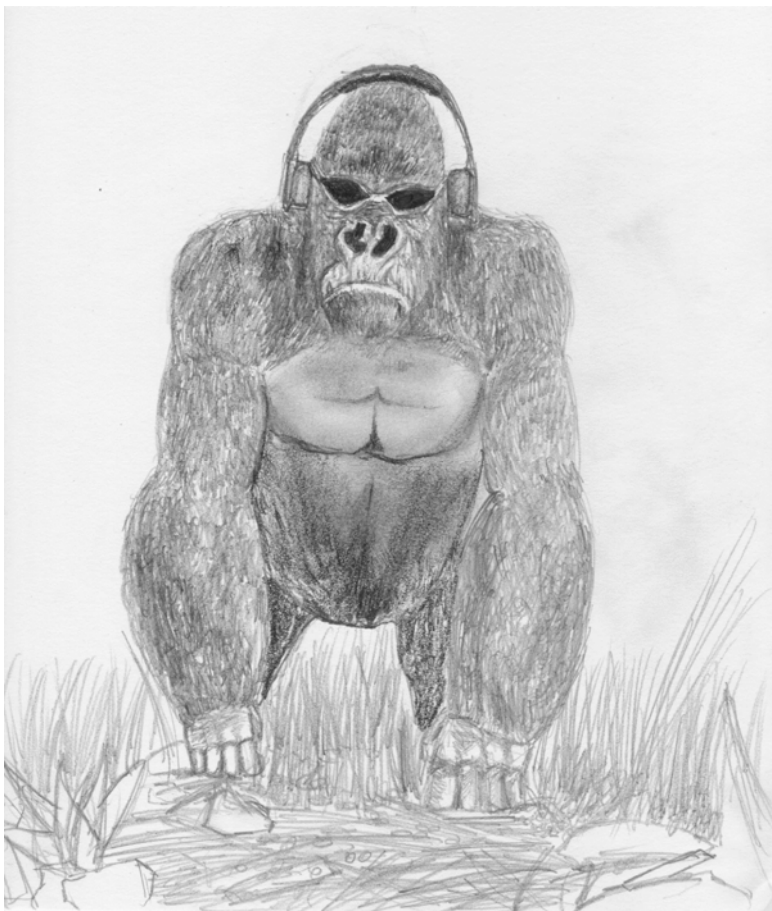
When I saw that green light I prayed for everything, especially this jump. Falling through the air I want to say I was scared, but I felt so calm. I'll tell you this, there is no greater feeling than that of the ripcord being pulled and the jolt of the parachute slowing your descent. When the parachute opened the drop felt like it took an hour, maybe more. I watched as the plane I had just jumped out of go up in flames. I could only believe that god would have a hand in saving the pilot in that plane. My hopes were realized when I saw the pilot safely jump with a parachute strapped to his back. My eyes were locked on the pilot falling to the ground as my legs caught the branches, and the chute caught the top of the tree. My little flight excursion came to a halt. It was 0510.

I was just on the outskirts of Berlin, rain with the stench of death dropped heavy on to the grassy humid floor. I had just entered the burning furnace of Hell itself. I moved into town, moving from brick building to brick building, the Fritz had this fortified city on lock down. I was one building

from the center of this shattered town. Himmler's office with its blood red German flag with its perfect swastika was on the opposite side, it was now 0530. I moved quietly inside the last building to where I would be set up. I headed up the cement stairs and was met in the middle by a scrawny, blond haired kraut. We looked at each other for a second then he swung the butt of his rifle at my face. I grabbed it and it became a struggle. We went back and forth, finally he gave up or so I thought. He went for his knife and that was just enough time for me to put the butt of the gun into his throat. Without hesitation he just dropped to the ground and rolled silently down the stairs. I went up the rest of the cement stairs there was the window I needed for my clear shot at Himmler. Two Germans manning an MG42 stood in between me and the death of Himmler. I walked in behind them a shot both of them with my nickel plated 1911 .45 silenced pistol. I moved up to the window pulled out my polished and oiled Springfield M1903A4 sniper rifle pulled the bolt back and loaded in one shell. That would be all I would need, to put the icing on the cake for this cruel SS. I looked down the iron sight through my scope. Perfect; he's sitting at his desk. I squeezed the trigger I looked up and thank god for the angel's protection 'cause all Hell was sure about to break loose. The rifle went off. His head, bloodied and weighed down with the protections of the Aryan race, dropped to his desk. "Der König Heinrich ist tot!" an officer shouted. His warm blood dripped slowly from the crack in his head and soaked the paper he had been writing on. It was time for me to make my escape. It was 0801.

I manned the MG42 and peppered the road with light armor piercing rounds of machine gun fire. I took out two full red and black platoons and four officers. The flag that had hung in Himmler's office now lay tattered with bullets of American pride. I sprinted down cement stairs and out of the building. Two dead Germans were sitting on a motorcycle. I pushed the bodies off and helped myself onto the new BMW R61 german motorcycle and burned rubber into the deep countryside. The first German checkpoint was coming up and I just was not feeling the urge to stop, so I pulled out my twenty pound Thompson and laid it sideways on the rubber area of my metal handle bars. I began to slow down so I could see how many Krauts I was dealing with. In my mind I counted, okay, only five grey uniformed guards. They all walked out, perfect, I sped up again about twenty or so feet from the checkpoint. Caught all the guards in a drive by. No one would be calling the next checkpoint. As I was going by the next checkpoint I dropped by and picked up a German uniform off the coat hanger inside the guard post. Looked like they wouldn't need the uniform anymore after the second guard house shootout. It just so happened the next checkpoint was closer than I expected. They had heard the gunshots. My fear was acknowledged when they fired at me. I opened up with my Thompson and a bullet pierced my side the hot metal went in one way and out the other. I kept going. Another one got my right arm and made my arm become engulfed in blood. At that I lost complete control of the bike and hit the ground. I saw german troops rushing towards me. I pulled out my .45 and shot five of them down; there were at least twenty because this was the French-German border. Hitler would not dare to just leave five or six nazis there for protection. I had had seven rounds left in the chamber. The germans had surrounded me at this time. I knew this was it. One of the krauts fell on me. "Oh Hölle, Amerikaner!" one of the german shouted. A bullet tore through his head; his blood dripped down onto my shirt as he stood with a blank stare for a five second margin before his legs finally gave out. I began to push the bodies off and crawl for cover in this distracting firefight. American airborne troops were out to do their bit. After about twelve minutes of gunshots I finally heard footsteps coming my way. I pulled out my gun and pointed it in the direction I heard the steps. It was the airborne platoon leader.

"So is your .45 fully loaded?" said the airborne leader with a slight grin on his face.



EARPHONES *pencil drawing by Jonathan Yung*

crazypants

my big sis,
she used to be a Bardstown Roadie

looking at stupid art
eating cheap burritos

falling in love with cigarettes
and sequined Rocky Horror parties.

until Life took notice,
kicked her ass,

spread her fingers like easy chalk
and stamped out the fell Marlboro.

she was upset for a while
but there were new friends to be had

new cheap eats
new exciting things to smoke.

rebellious Catholic-school girls
proved to be interesting enough

and now they lie around,
wearing crazypants, burning money.

by Cooper Henkel



WORN FLAG
digital photo
by Will Strothe

The Lost Brick

Parker Hyland

In a galaxy far away there is a world very similar to ours but in that world the buildings are made out of people, and the bricks walk and talk like people do here on earth. There is one brick that is unlike most bricks. He is an astronaut, and his name is James. He has a new mission: he has to find the nearest planet.

Nobody believed that James could do it, and they all said he would die. Even Harden, his pet rock, doubted him. Working, sweating, and bleeding, the ship was finally finished after four months. They finished it and were ready to take off. James grabbed food, water, and of course his pet rock. Trembling, shaking, and breathing heavily, Harden was scared out of his mind as the ship took off, but James was confident and was ready for the new planet. James. Excited and energetic, James launched before he was supposed to, unfortunately the planet he was supposed to go to on the other side of his planet at the time.

He was on the way to what he thought was the correct planet and all of the sudden the ship started shaking and spinning. Harden, scared and confused, ran around the ship barking and screeching. Nobody knew at first what was happening, but they went through a wormhole and James was so confused that he just turned around and headed back home. Or he thought he did.

When they got back to what they thought was their planet, they got in their car and drove home. As soon as they got home they noticed something very odd. Their house was made out of bricks. What looked like his family and friends were making up the walls of his house. Confused and sad, James cried, staring at this odd house until he fell asleep in the front yard.

The next morning James woke up in a human's hand, and Harden was in the other hand, barking and yelling. James and Harden were in shock, they were being held by a human! Once the human realized who (or what) was yelling, he yelled in shock as well. After they both calmed down the person took them inside and they explained themselves. James told the human who he was and where he came from and how people were what the houses are made up of. The person told him a story about his life and it sounded very similar to James'. They asked each other what each other's names were and they both replied with the same name, James H. Brick. A dog ran in barking. James got a look at the collar. It read *Harden property of James H. Brick*.

James the brick soon realized that he was looking at himself in human form. He was in shock, He would never have thought that there would see a walking, talking human especially not himself. The human thought it would be a good idea if James stayed with him They decided it would be too confusing to say each other's names so they were going to call each other Brick and Human.

Brick was watching TV one day as the president was giving a speech, Brick knew that everything that he was saying was wrong, Brick knew how to change it; in his world they were far more advanced in most things. Brick would be nervous about getting up in front of millions of people to speak, though, especially since he was a brick and nobody would understand what was happening.

Brick told Human that he thought he should run for president. Human thought that this was the most insane idea he had ever heard. It's not that he didn't think that Brick was smart enough but that he was a brick, and nobody would believe that he actually existed. Human got the idea that Brick could tell him everything, and Human could run for president so that way it was: Brick,s ideas but nobody would be confused.

The election started and Human was extremely nervous because he was never very good at speaking in front of crowds, and the election crowds could be some of the biggest crowds ever. Brick's ideas were nothing like anything that people had ever heard of, and they didn't want anything to do with what he was saying. Human started getting more and more nervous every passing day. Brick just kept convincing him that it would work out.

Eventually Brick decided to tell everybody the truth. He walked out and there was a quite chuckle over the crowd. He started talking and at first he was doing well, but there was a murmur growing in the crowd about the odd talking Brick. Not many people heard what he was saying clearly, but the people that did hear were very impressed. They were confused why James the Human would put out a brick to talk for him.

After the speech the only thing on the news for several weeks was the talking brick for president. Most people said that it was just a puppet and the person behind the ideas was just nervous. Brick was invited to The Opera Show. He told everybody that he was in fact real and he told everybody his entire story. Many people were still in denial so they brought out a doctor to examine Brick. Quite and still, the country waited in anticipation. The doctor stood up. He looked extremely confused. Dazed and confused the doctor whispered ,“He's alive.” The entire world stopped in shock.

It was finally Election Day and it was going to be close. The count was almost over. Brick shaking, Human biting his nails, the name was called. James H. Brick is the president of the United States. Brick turned America around and made it perfect. Brick was president of the United States for three terms because the people liked him so much. James the Human got to live in the White House the whole time but didn't do anything. After his three terms in America, he went to Mexico and spread his ideas there. Now they have the second best economy and second best military right behind the U.S.A.

I Swallowed My Pen

I swallowed my pen on purpose.
I crammed it into my mouth,
Chewed it up and gulped it down.

I was curious about how
Words tasted so I ate my pen.
I followed it with water.

It wasn't bad at all.
It digested rather easily.
Words spread throughout my body

And ran through my veins.
My mind was consumed with them.
Thoughts and ideas developed quickly.

I began to write them down.
I chose my words carefully.
And this poem was magically created.

by Will Strothe



BEACH *digital photo by Will Strothe*