

THE UNHOLY HAND GRENADE OF MISUNDERSTANDING CAN BE LAID UPON ANY WHO STAND IN THE WAY OF BIG POPPA E'S 100% PURE MAGIC POETRY, AND FOOLS WHO STEP UP SHALL BE LAID WASTE AND THUS BE SEAN SHEA'D INTO THE LAND OF FILTH!

THE BOOK OF THELONIOUS THE SLEEPY SHARED THE WORDS OF THE INTERGALACTIC PROPHET ARETHA WHEN HE WROTE THE WISE AND TEPID PHRASES: "HAIL POETRY! CLEANSER OF SOULS! REAPER OF ENNUI! MASSAGER OF ACHING BRAINSTEMS! HAIL!"

BIG POPPA E GAVE THE WORLD HIS 100% PURE MAGIC POETRY SO THAT ALL MIGHT BE ONE! PRAISE BE TO BIG POPPA E! DO NOT WORSHIP HIM, FOR HE IS A FOOLISH MORTAL HUMAN STAIN, BUT WORSHIP THE CLEANLINESS OF HIS WORDS AND WITNESS!

DIRT OF THE UNIVERSE IS UNDER OUR PSYCHIC FINGERNAILS AND THERE IS BUT ONE WAY, THE TRUE WAY, TO CLEANSER OUR SOULS OF UNHOLY CONSUMPTION AND IMMORALITY OF CONSUMER DEATH SOCIETY VILENESS: BIG POPPA E'S MAGIC POETRY!

THE FIRST AXIOM OF THELONIOUS THE FRAGRANT SHARES THE UNQUENCHING WISDOM OF ARETHA THE FLOPPY: "LO! WE ALL LOOK AROUND US! WE SEE PAIN AND SUFFERING AND ANGST AND THE FRUIT OF FAT POLITICIANS BARING YELLOW TEETH AND BRANDISHING POLLUTED THOUGHTS OF GANGRENE AND POLYSTYRENE, BUT THERE IS A WAY! A TRUTH! A LIGHT! BEYOND ALL! WE MUST BECOME ONE IN THE SPACESHIP OF BIG POPPA E'S MAGIC POETRY AND CLEANSER OURSELVES FROM THE FILTH OF BOREDOM AND SEXUAL DEVIANCE! TAKE OUT YOUR BRAIN AND LATHER IT WITH POETRY!" HAIL! LO! HUZZAH! WE MUST SLAM!!

WE MUST ALL LOOK OURSELVES IN THE MIRROR OF OUR INEQUITY AND REFUSE TO FLINCH, BUT WITH HAZY EYES FOGGED BY PINK FLOYD AND CHEEZIE POOFS, THIS JOB IS TOO MUCH! TOO HARD! TOO PAINFUL! WE ARE ONLY HUMAN! BUT WITH BIG POPPA E'S MAGIC POETRY, WE CAN CLEANSER OURSELVES AND SEE CLEARLY FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE SPACESHIP WOMB BIRTHED US!

POETRY SLAM IS NOT THE ANSWER! BIG POPPA E IS NOT THE ANSWER! THELONIOUS THE WISE FAILS TO SEE THE HUMOR IN BOWEL DISTRESS AND MORAL TURPENTINE! THERE IS NO ANSWER! THERE IS ONLY 100% PURE MAGIC POETRY, AND WE ALL ARE ONE AND ONE ARE ALL!

TO SIMPLIFY AND ENJOY LIFE MORE, ADMINISTER THIS 100% PURE POETRY/AS OFTEN AS SAFELY AND SANELY POSSIBLY, THE UNSURPASSED MILDNESS AND SOUL CLEANSING POWER OF BIG POPPA E'S MAGIC POETRY WILL SOOTHE AND CLARIFY EVEN THE MOST CLOUDED OF SOULS WITH PURITY AND CALM TRANQUILITY. WE ARE ALL ONE UNDER BIG POPPA E! HAIL! TRUTH! HUZZAH!

100% PURE POETRY!

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Big Poppa E's Magic Poetry

"ALL-ONE!"

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CATS ARE OUR NATURAL LEADERS! FOLLOW THEM! THEY ARE THE OLD GODS, FOOLS!

WHOLESOME!

THIS SOCIETY IS BUILT ON LIES AND FOOLISHNESS! PAIN AND SUFFERING!
INHUMANITY AGAINST MAN! AGAINST WOMAN! AGAINST CHILD! AGAINST
DOG AND CAT! BIG POPPA E'S MAGIC POETRY CAN FREE YOUR MIND FROM
THE TRYANNY OF UNWHOLESOME DISTRIBUTION OF ANGST AND AGONY! WE
ARE ALL ONE! NONE ARE ONE WITHOUT ALL! GIVE THANKS TO 100% BPE!

MADE IN USA!

NO ONE EVER PLANTED A TREE OF KNOWLEDGE MORE PROFOUND THAN THIS CHAPBOOK, FOOL!

SOME FOOLISH FELLOWS CHOOSE TO WANDER THE LONELY PLANET IN SEARCH OF TRUTH! OF LOVE! OF FRIENDSHIP! OF A DECENT POLISH DOG! BUT LO! THIS IS BUT RANK FOOLISHNESS AND SUFFERING! THE WAY IS LIGHTED BY POETRY AND FISH!

IN THE BOOK OF THELONIOUS, PROPHET ARETHA THE WIGGLE TAIL SHARES HER PROFOUND LOVE OF CLEANLINESS AND A WARM LAP UPON WHICH TO LIE HER FURRY HEAD! WHAT MORE DO WE NEED FOR HAPPINESS? ANSWER! BIG POPPA E'S POETRY!

THE EVIL TELEVISION EYEBALL OF DOOMSPEAK SEEKS TO DESTROY EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US CARBON-BASED LIFEFORMS, AND WE MUST STRUGGLE TO KEEP OUR MINDS FREE OF FILTH AND FURY, AND THE PROPHET ARETHA SAYS, "PET MY ASS, FOOL!"

WORMS OF SELF-DOUBT AND EAGER SELF-DESTRUCTION EAT INTO OUR VERY SOULS, BUT THE WAY IS CLEAR! THE PATH IS ERECT! THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE KNOWING ARE FUELED BY BIG POPPA E'S MAGIC POETRY, AND NONE SHALL BE ONE WITHOUT!

THE SECOND AXIOM OF THELONIOUS THE CO-DEPENDENT SPEAKS THE UNFAILING TRUTH OF ARETHA THE PROPHET WHO SAID, "WE MUST ALL SEEK THE UNDERNEATH! WHERE IT IS WARM AND SAFE! BE IT PILLOW OR BLANKET OR T-SHIRT, THE UNDERNEATH IS SAFE FROM PRYING EYES, BUT SURROUNDED BY SKIN AND FINGERNAILS!" CLEAN THE POTTY BOX OF YOUR MIND WITH SLAM!

S DON'T LET FRIENDS GROW UP

AND WHILE
THE BRILLIANT
ONES SLEEP,
A MILLION MORE
FALL SILENT...



KRAKATOA (2002)

my dad was a skilled bbq technician
and every central californian summer
he would lay his magic hands on meat
and conduct grand operas
of seared flesh and glowing charcoal briquettes
lifting galloping symphonies of flame
to do his bidding.

his bbq playground was nicknamed krakatoa,
a mammoth bbq not store-bought
but hand-built
brick by concrete brick
until it loomed over us
a visual horrorshow bereft of aesthetics
but efficient beyond reproach.

it was our fiery altar
to the gods of summer
and we worshipped weekly.

when i was in high school
we were a few streets removed
from poor white trash
and couldn't afford grade a choice #1
so when my father bought meat
he had to pound it into submission
and i'm not talking with one of those
namby-pamby chrome-plated tenderizer mallets
from the kitchen section at sears, no,
my dad used a fucking hammer
from the automotive section at kmart.

and he would knock the resistance
right outta that rump roast
cursing his day's frustrations away with every blow

attacking that t-bone till toughness fled shrieking
transforming cheap cuts of cow
into beef flavoured butter
that melted at the gentle kiss of a fork.

one of my fondest memories
is standing as a child
in the kitchen watching
my father beat his meat.

and while we stoked the coals
from the safety of shredded lawn chairs —
prodding porterhouses
charring chuck roasts
brushing and buttering and bbqing briskets and rib eyes —
we sat beside each other
and didn't say a word
just stared deep into the flames of krakatoa

him drinking a silver can of budweiser
me knocking back my brown bottle of ibc root beer
elvis on the a.m. radio

and it didn't matter
that i got shitty grades and cut class and
stole books from the mall and
played my depressing goth music too loud too late
and was probably on drugs
and probably gay
and probably a democrat
and probably going to amount to nothing
but a burden on my parents

and it didn't matter
that my dad was an emotionally distant tyrant
who threw away my books and records just to be mean
who made fun of me when i tried to find religion
who grounded me for weeks on end
even though i never left my room anyway
who accused me of being on drugs instead of admitting
he was the source of most of my problems
who made fun of my dorky dungeons and dragons friends
my black friends
my gay friends
my girlfriends
until i didn't have any friends left for him to make fun of
who made me ashamed to share his name

okay, yeah, maybe all that stuff did matter
but in those moments at the grill
we could at least pretend
all that mattered
was making sure the steak had enough
secret recipe bbq sauce
so it wouldn't dry out

spreading the coals to distribute the heat evenly
so no one got burned

me and my asshole dad
in the backyard
while my mother and sister
set the table inside
and never
ever
disturbed us.

THE DOUBLE GLASS DOORS OF YOUR HEART (2003)

if you had a full-body tattoo of a 7-eleven sign, i would open up the double glass doors of your heart and walk inside, saunter over to the slurpee machine of love and get myself a nice 32-ounce coke slurpee of faith and devotion, then i'd sashay over to the candy aisle and get myself a nice butterfinger of passion — maybe even a nice jumbo butterfinger of passion, the really big one that's as big around as an "ok" sign with your thumb and pointer finger — and then i would traipse over to the magazine rack and get a frash copy of juggs magazine of eternity, then i would wait in line behind the guy buying a money order to pay to have his phone reconnected — and i would wonder how that guy got in here because what the fuck? this is like, not just some 7-eleven down the block from where i live, no, this is the 7-eleven of your soul tattooed on your body, so what the fuck are you letting people in here to pay their goddamned phone bills? but then the guy would be done and i would prick my finger and pay for my coke slurpee of faith and devotion and my jumbo butterfinger of passion and my juggs magazine of eternity with drops of my lifeblood, and i would make my way for the double glass doors of your heart, but the doors wouldn't open, and it would occur to me how odd it is that places that are open 24-hours a day have locks on their doors? if they never close, why have locks on the doors? and then it would occur to me that you had tricked me, you would've had that body-sized tattoo of the 7-eleven sign removed with lazer technology while i was in there spilling blood for my coke slurpee of faith and devotion and my jumbo butterfinger of passion and my copy of juggs magazine of eternity — was it the juggs magazine? i can put it back! i can get, like, newsweek! — and then i would just sit there, propped against the locked double glass doors of your heart, my feet splayed out in front of me, eating my jumbo butterfinger of passion, drinking my coke slurpee of faith and devotion, reading my blood-stained juggs magazine of eternity and wondering what was going to happen next... and wondering just how long the counter guy had been here... like, do you just let anyone, like, live here? in your heart? was he trapped, too, back when you had a body-sized tattoo of, what? fucking, circle k? what the fucking fuck? is that what your heart is? a revolving door in the circle k of doom?

loving you is like a really weird dream
i don't even know i'm having.

CELLOPHANE (2003-2004)

i am starting my poem from the middle of the audience, with no microphone, with no paper, with nothing but my words, rising amongst you all... unashamed... unafraid... as if one of your very own has suddenly be electrified to speak and is incapable of resisting temptation.

now...

i am slowly walking around the room, causing heads to turn and eyes to follow, focusing the attention of this room like the spokes of a giant invisible wheel with my words at the hub. the barriers between speaker and spoken-to have been erased. there is no stage; all the world's a stage! there is no microphone; all of our mouths are microphones! there is poetry; there is only life! there are no poets; there's only us breaking down the barriers between us.

now watch! as this empowers me to do things i normally would never do, like find the most beautiful woman in this entire room, walk towards her with my bedroom eyes a-glinting, run my fingers through her soft, rose-scented hair, and gently place upon her lips... a kiss.

now watch! as this woman -- who normally would never allow me to do this -- allows me to do this!

now watch! as i find the biggest, baddest, meanest motherfucker in this entire room, press my forehead to his, and offer my stare as a challenge.

now watch! as i slowly walk away... without getting my legs broken... for he knows this is not just a slam poem: this is a lucid dream over which we have complete control. this is not just a poetry slam: this is statement! this is a manifesto! this is us raising our voices as one and telling the powers that be that we do not need their \$200 million special effects budgets! we do not need their 60,000 watts of sound! we do not need their cable teevee, their high-speed internet, their cell phones that can take fucking pictures!

at the poetry slam, we have distilled mass communication down to its most basic elements -- a mouth; a stage; and an audience -- and with those simple tools, we can do anything.

we can build bridges between us, or we can bring them down.
we can build skyscrapers of knowledge, or we can bring them down.
we can elect effective political leaders, or we can bring their regimes
down.

we can make this guy go home tonight and call every ex-girlfriend he's
ever had and leave two words on their answering machine: "i'm sorry."

we can make this girl go home tonight and call every ex-boyfriend
who's ever treated her like shit and leave two words on their answering
machine: "fuck you! i am better off without you!"

and we can make this woman go home after this show and write things
in her journal she never thought she'd have the courage to write before
this night.

you see, this is not just some kind of game we are playing: this is real;
this is true; this is life; this is comparing notes on the human experience
to confirm that we exist.

you are no longer sitting in a smoky bar watching a poetry slam, no...
you are all cradled in the hearts and minds of poets. you are amongst
friends. you are surrounded by family. you are safe. you are one of us.

and this is our motto: slamito ergo sum... i slam, therefore i am.

ALBUQUERQUE PENANCE (2003)

hatch chiles roasting
over apple wood fire in
a backyard oil drum.

the skin blackens then
crackles as chile juice bursts
in bright green bubbles.

submerged, the skin slips
easily as banana
peels on a sidewalk.

thick home-rendered lard
protects hands while unsheathing
the hottest peppers.

new mexican stew:
potatoes, onions, chiles,
and crushed tomatoes.

handfuls of cumin,
salt, pepper, oregano,
and pungent garlic.

mighty southwestern
feast worthy of poetry:
one haiku won't do.

AUSTIN PENANCE (2003)

couple builds fort
of cardboard and newspapers
under wet freeway.

swollen lips of sky
spit rain at passing traffic.
man holds sign: need food.

toothless woman steers
shopping cart with garbage bag
umbrella overhead.

man under bridge has
four empty pants pockets and
two hungry puppies.

dirty asphalt steams.
angry car horns bitch and moan.
moist breath warms cold hands.

motorists ignore
soaking onramp veteran:
thumb pleads, "anywhere."

election billboards
leer, "if you voted for me,
you'd be home right now."

SUSHI PENANCE (2003)

ted the sushi chef
is a true poet, crafting
haiku from raw fish.

his poet's palette
playfully juxtaposes
textures and flavours.

press the flesh and rice
to palate with tongue to melt
with warm wasabi.

barbecued eel and
sweet avocado mingle
in tastebud tangos.

eyes closed, head tilted,
close-mouthed smiles giving birth to
breathy sighs and moans.

cleanse the tongue with hot
green tea and pickled ginger,
then dive in for more.

pablo neruda
spent nine lives striving for what
ted does with sharp knives.

WENDY'S PENANCE (2003)

drive-thru window guy
asks, "what'llya have?" i say,
"can i get world peace?"

he says, "we're outta
world peace. would you like to try
a burger meal deal?"

i think about it
for a moment, then say, "can
you biggie size that?"

he says, "of course i
can biggie size that. that will
be four fifty-six."

i'm thinking of man's
inhumanity to man...
the environment...

drive-thru window guy
hands me my order, then he
says, "have a nice day."

hot salty french fries
won't help world peace one bit, but
they sure do taste good.

WAR PENANCE (2003)

let's get all the chairs
and blankets and make a tent
in the living room.

we'll order pizza,
make crank calls, and talk about
our very first kiss.

you can kick my ass
at scrabble. i'll kick yours at
trivial pursuit.

we'll turn off the lamps,
get in out sleeping bags, read
comics with flashlights.

we'll fall asleep with
foreheads touching, faint traces
of smiles on our lips.

you will wake up to
the smell of fresh-baked orange
rolls and ground coffee.

it will almost be
like the whole wide world is not
sliding into hell.

ROAD PENANCE (2003)

1,500 miles
from st. cloud to las cruces
for our monday gig.

matthew and i have
seemingly endless supplies
of dick and poop jokes.

i drive. matthew sleeps.
cold coke. punk rock. blurred landscapes.
take a piss and switch.

matthew drives. i sleep.
hot coffee and cigarettes.
take a piss and switch.

thirty bucks gets you
a tank of gas and nearly
500 more miles.

tiny clenched fists of
pain wrench the muscles along
my road-weary spine.

i'm relying in those
miles, sister. i'll be home by
tuesday afternoon.

POSTCARD FOR HILARY #1 (2002)

my skin aches to smell like you, it weeps,
a lost child in the mall
inconsolable and clutching
at passing hems
mouthing your name

my skin could erode mountains with its tears

POSTCARD FOR HILARY #2 (2002)

a tear
weighs less
than a raindrop

yet an ocean of tears
can crush
the life from you

sadness
is heavy
it bends the back arthritic

a body needs to be touched
thirsts
cracked desert floor
weeps for warm rain

POSTCARD FOR HILARY #3 (2003)

pomegranates
are strange fruit

crack one open
expose the ruby heart
pure

but they are difficult
and messy
and you can't quite figure out
what you are supposed to do with them

eating one
leaves your fingertips
stained bloody
your mouth full
of inedible matter
but the juice

(oh, the juice!)

sweet cut
with tart
perfect

worth every bit
of trouble

POSTCARD FOR HILARY #4 (2002)

the thing about store-bought flowers
is that they always die
no matter what you do
you can give them everything
all the water the nourishment
the sun
and you eventually watch them
fade
slowly at first
brown around the edges
but then on day
you can't even remember
what they looked like
when they were new
what it felt like
to walk into the room
lit by these
little yellow hands
with a thousand fingers
hoping for you to hold them

you finally sigh
pick the sad bouquet for brown fists from the table
and throw them away
so you don't have to look at them anymore

PASSERSBY (2003)

i am the one on the bus you shoulder past every morning on your way to work, the one who's reading your favorite book.

i am the one walking in the rain as you drive past and think to yourself how glad you are to be in a car instead of outside in the rain.

i am the waitress with the sniffly nose you didn't tip because you thought i took too long getting the lemon for your herb tea even though i apologized and didn't charge you for the tea because i thought you were cute.

i am the voice of the telemarketer who called at dinner, the one you hung up on in mid-sentence, the one who had more things in common with you than anyone you have ever met or will ever meet, the one who you'll never come in contact with again for as long as you live.

i am the temp who closes her eyes and breathes the scent of your hair conditioner as you pass her in the hallway at work.

i am the 76-year-old woman who drove so slowly in front of you on the freeway that you cursed at her and honked at her and drove angrily past her, the one you would've fallen madly and deeply in love with had you met her when she was 17 when she was a dancer and a poet.

i am the small woman with pale blue eyes who purchased a carton of orange juice and a bagel every weekday morning at your cafe on her way to work for a year who got another job and moved away one day, the one you thought of as "the oj girl," the one you saw again years later while walking through a crowded airport in lexington, kentucky, but didn't recognize, the one who saw you and thought, "oh, the bagel guy."

i am the man who lived in the apartment next to yours for three years, the one who slept with his head inches from your own every night separated by a hand's breadth of drywall, wood, and space, the one you never met because he got off work thirty minutes before you did, the one whose newspaper you borrowed every morning, read over breakfast, then carefully placed back in the plastic sack and returned to his front door as you left for work, the one with the cd collection nearly identical to your own.

i am your third grade sweetheart gazing out a bus window at an airplane passing thousands of feet overhead, the one who wonders whatever became of that little boy who would chase her around the jungle gym, the one who sighs deeply and turns back to her magazine as you gaze out the window of an airplane at the white roof of a bus stuck in traffic thousands of feet below and think about what airline meal to order, the chicken or the beef.

i am the cable guy, the pizza guy, your mom's next door neighbor, the landlord, the counter girl, the mechanic, the cop, the paperboy, the exotic dancer at the all-nude strip club, everyone you've ever stood behind in lines, cut off in traffic, spoken with over the phone, dated, loved and lost, sat next to in a movie theatre, walked past on the sidewalk, taken a piss next to in subway bathrooms, purchased lattes from, whose lawns you mowed when you were a kid, who filled your tank, who rang you up, who changed your tire, who gave you a flier while walking on sixth street.

we pass within inches of you every single day.

we have so many stories to tell.

and you will never know any of them.

SORROW - part two (2003)

edmund loved sad songs.

he collected them like some people collect stamps. he had japanese pop tunes that made his heart ache, mississippi blues riffs that caused tears to burst from his eyes, pakistani folks songs he could not begin to understand that made him bury his face in his pillow at night just thinking of them.

and he wondered how the sound of a bow drawn across the strings of a violin could conjure within him the forlorn thoughts of lost loves and dashed hopes, how breath blown through an oboe could bring him to his knees and weep.

and he wondered what those sounds had in common with the distant longing sound of train whistles, the mournful wail of wolves howling, the wind in the tops of willow trees.

edmund felt if he could isolate the root sounds in all of these sad sounds, hemight be able to arrange the notes into one chord, the playing of which would connect all the sad songs ever sung and all the sad sounds ever heard and bring forth an unstoppable human tide of glorious and well-earned tears.

and one day, after much labor, he found it.

and he organized a performance in a grand hall, and he invited members of the world press to come and encouraged them to broadcast the event simultaneously to all corners of the globe.

and on the night of the performance, edmund stood in front of his keyboard in a somber grey tuxedo and tails and a tall smoky stovepipe hat, and he cleared his throat, and he said very softly into the microphone, “and now, ladies and gentlemen of the world, i give you my gift... the chord of ultimate sadness.”

and the whole wide world held its breath.

and edmund brought his grey-gloved hand down softly on the keys.

and there issued forth from speakers all around the planet — from every radio station, from every television station — pure and beautiful and complete... silence.

and fat laughing buddhas with huge flapping earlobes danced waltzes down the cheeks of the whole wide world.

and edmund closed his eyes, lowered his head, and he smiled.

GRAND CANYON (2002)

standing on the lip
of the grand canyon
would create in me
a feeling
of awe

*awe: (n) a mixed emotion of reverence, respect, dread, and wonder
inspired by authority, genius, great beauty, sublimity, or might.*

how do you reduce that huge endless deep
into words, how do you fill the back
of a postcard with just the right phrases
to recreate in the reader
that same feeling
that
awe?

how can you do that justice
the view over your toes
of the gaping maw of the earth?

that's the same feeling i get
when i contemplate
writing about... this, about us, about you and me.

awe.

i have no words for this.

i can only grasp flailingly through old poems, old relationships, songs
someone else has sung, movies, books, trying to find the right words
that fail me.

i know this is big (like the grand canyon).
i know it feels endless (like the grand canyon).
i know staring into the face of it is both scary and amazing (awe).

i know i can walk around barefoot all the time and not have to worry
about thorns and broken glass as i'm thinking about you.

i know we are writing our own poetry, not with ink and pen but with
sweat and skin.

i don't want this love to be the pressed petals of a lavender rose, i want
to live this poem.

i'll write about it later.

YOU (2002)

you are pears to me, the gentle give under thumb, the snick of teeth past grassy skin into soft white flesh beneath, the rush of sweetness, the smell of fresh, of cool, the stickiness at the corner of my mouth, in the webs between my fingers, drooling down my forearm, my elbow, my toes.

you are the perfect mixtape to a long roadtrip with nothing between you and me but a thousand miles of open road and the wind-stained cactus and the sun tugging at my forearms darkening, the simple thoughts of you becoming the soundtrack, my silent smiles the cadence, the rhythm of my sighs the beat.

you are the smell of pure sleepy warmth snuggled in a bed too big for even both of us, the prickle of sweat dew-dropped and shining across little hairs on the back of your neck, you smell so good when you sleep inches from me, my nose planted betwixt your shoulder blades, taking you in... and somewhere soft in the distant, your breath catches for just a moment, then releases. you love me, even in your sleep, that sigh tells me.

you are that “oh my god!” pause as we both turn towards each other in unison, mouth agape, gathering our energy to burst forth in laughter, big milk-spilling laughs that make life worth living. you remind me what it’s like to laugh little kid laughs, giggles building to chortles to ululations of uncaged laughter so big your belly hurts, so big you have no choice but to fall to the ground and flail red-faced and puffy with tears.

you are poetry, pure and simple and written not to impress, but to express, poetry that oozes like sweat because it has no choice.

you are that firm grasp of fingers entwined, yearning to press flesh deep inside itself, and defiantly daring the world to even try — just fucking try! — to pull these hands apart, these hands were meant to hold each other, meant to guide and follow, meant to hold and be held, meant to be wrapped around each other while standing in line at the supermarket, while driving, under tables while dining with friends and family, under covers pressed to breasts and chins and bellies. sucking your fingertips is like plucking grapes from the vine with my lips, only far sweeter, and i totally and completely mean that.

you are that look that tells me, “stop. just... breath. stop thinking so much. let go. live. it’s perfectly okay to just be happy. no one will mind. i promise.”

you are bare feet in running water, rock-numbed ass and wind in my buzz cut, deep breaths and long exhales, looking around the texas hill country and already smelling the biscuits and gravy to come, alone on the bank of the llano river feeling like the happiest man in the whole wide world to have found you and totally forgetting for a whole hour about all the things i was supposed to be stressed about, all the shit that didn’t mean a goddamned thing in the presence of such stillness.

you are secret alcoves in rocky grottos, sleepy chords from jeff’s guitar, brenda and nate and david and keith and especially claire, shrimp alfredo pasta and world famous veggie burritos and toe-clinchingly great buttermilk pie and bubble soda and deep-fried sushi rolls with big mac sauce, tattoo-tagged bathtubs, mp3s, livejournal, “ya-hooooooooo!” at midnight because we forgot to turn the computer speakers off...

i could go on.

i will go on, adding stanzas until my fingers cramp. we have only just begun to live this poem, and i have only just begun to write it down.

HOW I ESCAPED MY SHITTY TOWN (A TRUE STORY) (1997)

My friend Brady was a bone-hard daddy with a mile-long dick and a wallet so thick with old porno movie tickets it took him a full minute and a half to pull it outta the ass pocket of his acid-washed jeans. Brady liked to say he'd slept with more women in high school than I'd sat next to, but the only woman I'd ever seen in the company of Brady was the 99-Triple D cup Dungeons & Dragons wet dream tattooed on his arm with stainless steel coffeecup titty armor sitting astride a snarling white polar bear and waving a 13-foot long battle axe in one hand and a bloody viking head in the other. Brady had an encyclopedic knowledge of every porn star who had ever stepped off a Greyhound bus in downtown Hollywood looking for a big break and ended up in movies like "Edward Penishands" and "Bright Lights, Big Titties" and "Das Booty." His collection of Hustler and Playboy and Penthouse and Fat Nasty Nekkid Biker Babes on Crack lined every free bit of wall space in his room and spilled out into boxes and crates and bookshelves in his garage. Brady said he would never get a hot-lookin' chick to work his weenie like a performing seal works a bicycle horn without the cash, Slash, without the mean green, Jelly Bean, so he was itching, he was ready, Brady was primed for some shit to go down.

And then there was Tony Baloney but everyone called him Grape Ape but not because he was big because Tony Baloney was a little scraunty bastard with big-assed radar ears ó had more ears than a methamphetamine addict got no teeth ó and the funkiest looking head... looked just like a grape seed, so we called his goofy almond-head shaped ass Grape Ape. Tony had been fucked with all his life and completely ignored by girls and teachers and his parents ó hell, everybody except for me and Brady ó and he was ready to kick the dust of this shitty town off his Converse Hi-Tops and see the world. But, he was poor and he was stupid and the only job he could find was sweeping the parking lot after the minor league games out at the baseball diamond at the edge of town and he never had enough money to get ahead. Tony was itching, he was ready, he was primed for some shit to go down.

And then there was me, Plan Boy 2000, with a hand full of Martin Scorsese videos and a head full of bad ideas. I was always the smart one who was gonna work my way through two years of community

college as a teller in the very same bank where my dad was the CEO. The very same bank that had big oil paintings of my grand dad and my great grand dad on display in thick old fashioned mahogany frames. I was the one with the pretty girlfriend already picking out china patterns and planning backyard barbecues and looking forward to squeezing out puppies like a baby factory. I was the one who had it made in the shade, Roller Blade, and had my future all planned out long before I was a twinkle in my momma's eye only I didn't want any of it because I hated my parents and I hated the banking business and as a matter of fact I was starting to hate my pretty girlfriend but there was nothing I hated more on this entire planet than this shitty little town and I was gonna get the hell out of there even if it was in the back of a police cruiser with the lights blazing and the front pages of every newspaper in the county shouting my name in large capital letters. I was more than itching for something to happen, man, I was breaking out in hives.

So, I hatched a plan and decided me and Brady and Tony Baloney were gonna get the hell outta Dodge only we weren't gonna slink outta town with our tails tucked between our legs, no, we were gonna go out with style, with class, with a bang that people would still be talking about for years to come. And as my two accessories sat cross-legged on my bedroom floor, I brought Exhibit A from beneath my bed: a fully loaded semi-automatic small calibre solution to our problems. As their eyes went wide with "What the Fuck?" I told them my plan. It would be an inside job, see, with me working the drive-thru teller at my dad's bank and Brady and Tony Baloney coming up in the drive-thru in a borrowed car. I say, "Can I help you?" Brady shows me the gun and Tony Baloney says, "Show me the money, mother fucker!!!!" The bank's got a policy written in stone, you see, that says, "If they ask for it, you give it to them. Your life isn't worth the money." Boom boom boom, I fear for my life, boom boom boom, I put the money in the cassette and put it in the suction tube, boom boom boom, Brady and Tony slowly and calmly drive away and I wait a few minutes before I report it because I'm so nervous at having a gun pointed at me. Hell, I'll probably get a month's free counseling out of it and be proclaimed a motherfucking hero and my comrades will be waiting for me in a hotel room in Las Vegas with three girls who look just like the tattoo on Brady's arm! And my friends are down with this caper, brothers and sisters, they are ready to dig in on my shindig and little dollar signs light up in their eyes and Tony Baloney says to me, he says with a shaking voice, he says, "You know, I've got a monkey head mask I could wear and nobody would even know it was me." And I say,

“Goddamn it, Grape Ape, you show up in a monkey head mask and nobody’s even gonna know the difference, you big goofy Cantina scene in Star Wars looking motherfucker. Besides, I’ll take that gun from Brady’s hand and shoot you with it myself! Just stay cool and try not to drool, Fool, and I’ll serve up the money like pastafazool!”

The big day arrives and I am cool as a cucumber, slippery as a snake in the green green grass and I’m working the drive-thru teller like I always do and everything is fine as fine wine and the appointed time comes... (dot dot dot) and goes (period). Click clock click, the clock ticks, and my eyes be picking out every white sedan that comes gallumphing through the drive-thru, but not a damn one of them is carrying Brady and Tony Baloney. Click, clock, click, sweat’s beading on my lip, and still no Brady, and still no Tony Baloney. Click, clock, click, goddamn it, my hands are shaking, where the fuck are they, my nerves are quaking, where the fuck are they, I’m feeling the tickle of a thousand imagined stares, click, clock, click, I drop two \$20 dollar bills on to the teller booth floor and bend over to get it and bump my goddamn head on the table on the way up BAM! and as I rub my head I look outta my window and what should I see?

A white sedan being driven by some dumb motherfucker in a goddamned monkey head mask! And the silly motherfucker in the passenger side is wearing a Casper the Friendly Ghost mask! Believe you me, brothers and sisters, my hands were shaking more with rage than with fear as I pushed the intercom button and hissed through clenched teeth, “May I help you?” And the monkeyhead just looks at me and I’m looking at the monkey head and I say it again, I say, “May I help you?” and the monkey head turns and looks at the Casper the Friendly Ghost head then back at me, then nods it’s head up and down, so I clench my teeth so tightly the windows in a thousand counties could shatter into a bzillion tiny pieces and I punch the intercom button and I whisper, “Take off the goddamn monkey head mask...” and the monkey head looks back at the Casper head then back at me and shakes it’s fucking monkey head, ñno.’ So, I hit the intercom button with the palm of my hand and snarl, “Where’s the gun, peckerhead?” and the Monkey head looks down and brings up the gun holding it like it was a dead fish and he shows it to me, so I pound the fucking intercom button four or five fucking times and I say, “Where’s the goddamn note?” and the monkey head is still sitting there showing me the gun and looking over his shoulder at the Casper head and I say it again, I say, “Where’s the goddamned note?” and I hear them muttering to themselves back

and forth and I see the Casper head climb into the back seat while the Monkey head opens the glove compartment door and I take my knuckle and jab it into the intercom button and say, “Do not tell me you forgot the fucking note, you fucking monkeyheaded motherfucker, DO NOT TELL ME YOU FORGOT THE FUCKING NOTE!!!” and then I feel a tap on the shoulder...

“Is everything alright?”

...the muffled sound of screeching tires blends with the creak of my neck as I turn to see the shift manager standing there behind me, his eyes darting from me to the teller window then back to me again. I can't speak. I can't move. I can't breath.

“You're all white... and you're forehead is soaking... do you need a break?”

...and I manage to croak, “Yes, I need a break.”

And as the shift manager presses his head against the glass of the teller booth and looks at the black tire trail engraved in the drive-thru pavement, I slowly walk out of the teller booth and walk through the lobby and walk out the front door and I walk down the street and I feel something in the fist of my left hand and I look down and it's those two \$20 bills I'd dropped on the floor so I take a left at the used clothing store and march toward the Greyhound Bus Station with a brand new plan and I never look back.

13 METAPHORS FOR WHY WE SHOULD NEVER DATE (2002)

you are the jagged rusty tip of a nail sticking out of a polished wooden bannister, and i am the little kid sliding down that bannister in baby blue felt pajamas.

you are the computer hard drive grinding to a complete halt, and i am the last 200 pages of the great american novel written in a mad 12-hour rush that were never saved.

you are the speeding train hurtling toward the stalled greyhound, and i am the cure for cancer whispered by the bus driver seconds before impact.

you are the answering machine that eats the tape,
and i am the telephone call from ed mcmanahan saying
you have just won 26 million dollars
if you just call back right... now...

* you are a small furry rodent wrapped tightly in duct tape,
and i am richard gere.

you are the bullet, and i am the kennedy.

* you are rock, and i am scissors.
* you are scissors, and i am paper.
* you are paper, and i am rock.

you are gollum, and i am frodo's ring finger.

you are a daytime emmy award, and i am susan lucci.

you are a ham sandwich, and i am mama cass.

you are a super tanker bulging with oil, and i am alaska.

you are george w. bush, and i am alaska.

you are the misplaced anger of every democrat
who was sure al gore could carry

his home state of tennessee,
and i am ralph nader.

you are *the matrix reloaded*,
and i am the kid from cleveland sick with cancer
who begged the make-a-wish foundation for a chance
to see the new star wars movie before he died
and whose last words were, "i want my fucking wish back!"

you are the dog that ate the cat that ate the rat that had the flea that bit
me and gave the bubonic plague.

you are the curse on rock stars whose names began with "j," and i am
jeff buckley, jerry garcia, janis joplin, jimi hendrix, jim morrison, john
lennon, john bonham, john belushi, jim croce, brian jones, and jesus
christ.

you are michael jackson...
and i am not going to go there.

you are the proposed sequel to *the goonies*
they've talked about for the last 15 years,
and i am corey feldman...
waiting...
for that phone call...
for the last 15 years.

which is to say, you and i do not go together like peas and carrots; we
go together like candy apples and razor blades.

and i am aware of this... i KNOW this... and yet...
at three in the morning,
i find myself staring at the ceiling
and thinking
about you.

26 NEW RULES FOR POETRY SLAMMING (2003)

1] just because you think you should start your poem by singing doesn't mean you should.

2] if your introduction is longer than the actual poem, you still have a lot of writing to do

3] just because you have houseplants does not mean you are a farmer. just because you put out a grease fire in your kitchen does not mean you are a firefighter. and just because you have a notebook full of crappy poetry doesn't mean you are a poet..

4] despite what you might think, i don't wanna choose whether you should do a funny poem or a serious poem. just read the fucking poem.

5] you might think we want to hear your same three poems over and over again, but you are smoking crack! i don't care if they score well every time you read them! either write some new shit, or sit the fuck down!

6] henceforth, each slam poet will be allowed an oppression poem of maximum of... say... 25. so go ahead, let yourself go, cut loose, fuck shit up, but then you have to move on. you're not doing your struggle any favors by turning it into a cliché, and your pain isn't nearly as interesting as you think it is.

7] just because your poem contains the word "revolution" does not make you part of one. in fact, anything resembling the phrase "the revolution will be televised" will henceforth be taxed, and all proceeds will be sent directly to gil scott heron. and this includes "the revolution will be memorized," "the evolution will be criticized," "the solution will be hypothecized," whatever. so either pay up, or find your own goddamned metaphor!

8] 8, 8, i forgot what 8 was for.

9] just because you think you can beat box, doesn't mean you should.

10] for once, just try to write a sestina. would it kill you?

11] just because you're the only white guy who dares to be a racist, sexist, homophobic asshole at a slam doesn't mean you are brave, it just means you're a racist, sexist, homophobic asshole.

12] just because you think you look cool waving your arms around in slow motion doesn't mean you do. stop wiggling around and read the fucking poem.

13] if you cry every single time you read that sad poem, i will stop believing you. just read the fucking poem.

14] challenge yourself at least once to write a love poem that has nothing to do with sex and makes no mention of body parts or even the word "love." in fact, let's ban the fucking word "love" altogether. if you can't tell the person you love that you love them without using the word "love," then maybe you're not really a poet. maybe you are just another asshole who writes poetry.

15] if you use a poetry slam to get laid, maybe it won't turn sour on you right away, but you will eventually pay for it. that's just sad, and karma is a bitch.

16] writing a poem about the poem that you want to write is not really the same as actually writing the poem. don't TELL ME about the poem you want to write, just write the fucking poem.

17] not all poems have to score 30's. have the courage to write and read a 20 now and then.

18] henceforth, all poems must stop immediately after the fifth utterance of the word "i."

BPE RAP (2003)

my name is big poppa
my rhymes is improper
if you try to dive on me
you'll do a belly flopper

i can't be controlled
my rhymes is like gold
if you try to step to me
you'll be knocked out cold

and you know why?
well, i'll tell you why...

i rock hip-hip
like bare feet rock flip-flops
like timex got tic-tocs
like yo momma needs a tic-tac
and yo sister eats them big macs

ain't no slack in my mack
you'd better jump back
or i will attack
and you would not like that

RUH!

i'm slaying mc's with my doo-doo rhymin'
i'm bustin' out my rhythms
like i bust yo momma's hymen
what? you wanna play games?
let's play play simple simon...
simon says, "shut the fuck up."

i slam so good, one-two-three,
punk-ass tolstoy got nothin' on me

my rhymes are warm wool slippers
put your cold-ass feet in
they'll lock you up like
aleksandr solzhenitsyn

i'm cookin' up lyrics like i was a chef, see,
i'll give you rhymes and punishment like dostoyevski

before you step to me, you better back the fuck off
'cuz i got mo plays than anton chekov
got more little girlies than vladmir nabokov
got more winning moves than gary kasparov
got more poetry in motion than mikael barishnikov
got more funny lines that yakov smirnov

i got more melody than tchaikovsky
i got more abstraction than wassily kandinsky
i know more cat people than nastasia kinsky
and i shit better poetry than robert pinksy

what? that's right! i said it!
i do not regret it!
if my weenie were a rabbit maybe i would let you pet it!

and you know why?
well, let me tell you why.

my name is big poppa
watch me while i drop a
poem on your dome
shine it up like chrome
make you move yo momma back into a nursing home

i'm a slam barbarian
a pain librarian
make a cattle rancher
turn into a vegetarian
make sir lancelot think that he is maid marion
take a regular N and give it some horns and fangs
make it a scary N...

before my reputation starts to diminish
i'll bring my bullshit rhyme to its merciful finish
yo,, i'm outta here.

ODE TO GEORGE W. BUSH (2003)

there are only three things in this life -- three! -- that are inevitable:
excruciating pain; endless suffering; and, in the end, george w. bush.

george w. bush is eternal.

like a carbunkle on the ass of god, george w. bush is omnipresent.

like the fetid breath of doom itself, george w. bush is ubiquitous.

like a scallion hoard of bulbous burgemeisters in blinding white
diphthongs and hairless flexing duotangs, george w. bush is everlasting.

like curmudgeonly montebanks and their shiny brown fluxus on
gutterwailing thoroughbreds of unctious vituberance, george w. bush is
infinite.

like the rotting severed footlimbs of girlfriends numbers 12 & 3
mouldering in your bedsheets and squirming blindwhite holy hell,
george w. bush is undying.

like galloping swaths of born-again vegemites with flaming
swaghammerly locked tight in their bony grasps, george w. bush will
always be there.

waiting for you nattering swarms of naysayers and nincompoops,
naybobs and nimbly whores, like lovelorn holy rollers engorged
with armageddon vindaloo, like love gone to pus, like ambergris and
villanelles and marshall stacks and acid rain, not unlike a kitty head in
the bowling bag of destiny.

yes, not unlike a kitty head in the bowling bag of destiny.

gaze upon him in fear, you silly stupid mortals, you stupid silly insipid
mortals, you vapid jejunes and fibbertigibbets, you menial moribunds
and tepid iguanas, you lame-fisted lovers of calvin and hobbes sunday
comics and weekend episodes of six feet under..

george w. bush towers above you all, grating and witless and bizarre,
wrapped in swaddling clothes and drooling madly, a fistful of Asian
porn in one hand and a pitcher of vanilla coke balanced on his

enormous penis, sticking rotten vegetables in his snotty bunghole and sucking his tears to sunday while the world licks its wounds.

george w. bush will always be there...
but, like god, he just might not be there for you.

HEROIN (1988)

swan dive
of the edge
of the world

into a sea of molasses
with an enveloping
PLOP!

happy
little
ant
in amber
suspended weightless
in a numbing womb of goo

all sight
all sound
all pain
absorbed

in the fuzzy grey hum
of disconnection

DARN (1993)

jagged fingers sew
cruel patterns and folds
into your creased face
right before your dimming eyes
like some quilt
seams ripped apart and
carelessly stitched together again
your visage frays
unravels
go ahead disbelieve if you must
this threadbare hag is not you
not you with harsh-white hair
and crushed linen skin
There! on the Shelf! on the Wall!
The True Reflection!
in the rosewood picture frame
in the sticky yellow pages
of the high school yearbook
heave your wrinkle-bound fist
through the blasphemous glass
then drape your bones
across the easy chair
and let your wandering mind's cool breath
fill your head with
billowing breeze-filled truth
and smile
and ignore the mirror's lies
as they trickle
from between your old woman's hands
down the insides of your varicose pencil-legs
and puddle
in your dirty pink house shoes

INCANTATION 3: THE ODYSSEY (1999)

...and I look
into the 17-year old eyes
of my father
in that boot camp snapshot
and see...

the son of a son of a sailor's son
four generations
of escaping to sea
fleeing backwoods and boondocks
for shipping lanes and greasy docks
and endless ocean blues.

goodbye godebowl, oklahoma!
go to hell bakersfield, california!
eat shit shamrock, texas!
fuck you, wichita, kansas!

four generations
of kicking the dust
of our shitty little towns
from our boots,
of setting out on our own
still wet behind the ears
and working our way
across the sea
to find ourselves.
four generations
of telling our fathers
to kiss our asses,
of turning our backs on home
and never looking back,
of turning our hearts
into bitter black holes
and facing the void
at sea

and returning

a little taller
a little skinnier
to replace the fractured homes
that spawned us
with wives and houses and mortgages and
bills and dreams upon dreams upon dreams and
sons.

...and I look
into my 17-year-old eyes
in that boot camp snapshot
and see
that we have never left home,
never severed the umbilical cord
that strangled us all,
never freed ourselves
from becoming exactly what we despised.

all of us turning
in ever-shrinking circles

yearning

for a home
we've never had.

TEMP HELL (2002)

I SHOW UP TO WORK ON TIME, AND I VALUE HARD WORK.

this phrase is glowing at me green from a computer screen. beneath these words are five choices from which i am to choose the degree to which i agree with the above statement: strongly disagree; disagree; sometimes agree; agree; and strongly agree.

i am in a temp agency called adecco in austin, texas, and i am in the third of what will be four hours taking tests that will measure my ability to use such helpful programs as microsoft word, microsoft excel, and microsoft powerpoint.

this particular test seems to be testing my moral character on a five-point scale. let's call it Microsoft Homeland Security.

i know which answer they want. they want to know that i am a hard worker, that i am prompt, that i am worth the money the client company will pay for my services. i agree with this question with no reservation, i do, i believe that i am a hard worker. they *want* me to click on STRONGLY AGREE. i feel good about it, so i do.

the next question flashes on the screen.

IT IS OKAY TO STEAL OFFICE SUPPLIES SUCH AS PAPER CLIPS AND PENS FROM THE BUSINESS TO WHICH I WILL BE ASSIGNED SINCE EVERYBODY DOES IT.

i smile at this one, look around the temp agency office to see if anyone else can read this and thinks like i do that it's a ridiculous question, but no one is looking over my shoulder, of course. the agency representatives are busy answering phones and faxing resumes and e-mailing resumes and filing resumes while the hopeful temps in this office are busy with their own tests. the only sound besides the hushed tones of the representatives and the clicks of the keyboards are my barely stifled giggles and the sound of my eyeballs rolling in their sockets.

why ask such a question? do they really think someone would *actually* answer this question using any choice other than STRONGLY DISAGREE? maybe that's the point: not to weed out the dishonest temps from the honest ones, but to weed out the reasonably intelligent ones from the few so incredibly stupid that they would not know enough to click STRONGLY DISAGREE whether they were lying or not. or maybe

they want to find out who would try to bullshit their way through it, answering the questions the way they thought the company wanted them to answer them rather than answering them truthfully. like, if you picked **STRONGLY DISAGREE** every time you thought you were supposed to, they would think you were lying.

i click **STRONGLY DISAGREE**.

i hate this process. i have been here since 8 a.m., and i am not barely halfway through with the testing. i always test in the high 90 percentile on these programs testing me for basic office skills, but for some reason their version of Excel testing kicked my ass with all kinds of questions i couldn't fake. usually, you can figure out how to answer their questions by simply rooting around the program and figuring them out, but this version of the testing program would score you as **WRONG** the very moment you clicked on something you shouldn't have, so i was all huffy and flustered by the end of it.

and now this, this computerized tool rating my moral turpitude.

**I TRY TO GET MY WORK DONE
IN A TIMELY MANNER
SO THAT I CAN TAKE IT EASY
THE REST OF THE DAY.**

how do you answer a question like this without getting it wrong? of course, i want to say that i work hard to get my tasks finished as quickly and efficiently as possible, but i don't want them to think i do it just to make time for myself to flake off. seems if you disagree with this one, it means you don't work hard and can't deal with deadlines, but if you agree with it, then it makes you a slackard who only works hard so you can fuck off the rest of the day. i have no idea how to answer it, so i click on **SOMETIMES AGREE**. i am sure i will be docked for it. why can't this be an essay question?

i have a headache. i haven't eaten today. i am getting cranky. this computer program thing is so demoralizing, like the humans who work here are too busy to actually interview me, so they're getting this computer program written in 1996 to decide whether or not i should be trusted with office equipment.

**IF I WERE OFFERED A BETTER JOB ELSEWHERE
WITH HIGHER PAY AND MORE BENEFITS,
I WOULD RESPECT MY COMMITMENT TO
THE TEMP AGENCY AND NOT ACCEPT IT.**

who are they trying to kid? the application i had to sign said this job was AT WILL, which means they can terminate my employment at any time with no advance notice for any or no reason, and yet they think i would actually turn down a better paying job with more benefits because of some fucking lame-assed sense of duty to some company who makes me sign a contract telling me they don't give a shit about me? what the fuck kind of idiot would agree with this statement?

i click on STRONGLY AGREE.

i *need* this job. everywhere i go, the temp agencies are jam-packed with out of work techies displaced by the internet economy falling to pieces, techies who type faster than me, who know more about computers than me, who have been out of work longer than me. i need this job, i need *any* job, and i need it quickly, so fuck it, i'll tell this computer anything it wants to hear.

**I WOULD NEVER SURF THE INTERNET,
CHECK PERSONAL E-MAIL, WRITE IN MY
ONLINE JOURNAL, OR MAKE PERSONAL
PHONE CALLS WHILE ON THE TIME CLOCK.**

this one evokes a snort of derision from me, something between a chortle and an outright guffaw that sounds like an engine backfiring right there in the gentle hum of desperation of the temp lobby. i look around to see if anyone heard me, and *everyone* is staring at me, even the agency reps shouldering phone handsets and typing at the same time. i play it off like it was a cough, cover my mouth with my fist and cough again -- "see, it was a cough!" -- sniff a little like i have a cold, and the heads turn back to the tasks at hand.

if anyone merely looks at my online journal during the times i was temping in seattle, they would see that i posted 5 and 6 times a day for months at a time, and if they were to go back in time and look over my shoulder as i was supposedly entering data, they would've seen three or four browser windows opened at the same time -- the new york times, my journal, my e-mail, the onion -- and they would've seen two or three IM windows opened as well, me typing 165 wpm as i carried on several virtual conversations and wrote e-mails and entered data all at the same time. "goddamn, that boy types fast," my co-workers used to say aloud.

i lie, huge and bald-faced, and click STRONGLY AGREE.

**I HAVE NEVER ABUSED MY ACCESS TO SUPPLIES OR
OFFICE EQUIPMENT SUCH AS COPY MACHINES
OR FAXES TO ADVANCE MY CREATIVE ENDEAVOURS.**

oh my god... i could never in a million years answer this question with even the slightest amount of truth and expect to be employed anywhere ever again. my entire creative career has been based on pinching office supplies whenever and wherever i could. if i ever make it big, i swear the first thing i will do is write kinko's and send them a check for \$25,000 with a note that just says, "thanks. don't ask." why do they even bother to pose this question? isn't it painfully obvious what answer they want from you? what is the point of even asking this question? it's such a waste of my time.

my head is throbbing.

i click STRONGLY AGREE.

**THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM SUBJUGATES THE
WORKING CLASSES, TRANSFORMING HUMAN BEINGS
INTO MINDLESS DRONES WHO EXCHANGE THEIR
SHORT LIVES FOR DIRTY SCRAPS OF PAPER AND
PROMISES OF A BETTER LIFE AFTER THEY DIE.**

i just stare, open-eyed, slack-jawed, hands limp at my sides, my scalp tingling *danger, danger.*

"what the fuck?"

i actually say this aloud, i interrupt the murmur of the temp lobby with a full-on, "what the fuck?" i don't even have to look, i know everyone is staring at me again, boring holes in the back of my head, pummeling me with golf-ball sized question marks, they answer my "what the fuck" with a corresponding "what the fuck is wrong with that guy who keeps talking to himself?"

i don't turn around to look, but i hear one of the agency reps say, "uhhm, sir? is there anything you need help with?"

i don't turn around, i just think, "it's actually *'is there anything with which i can help you.'*" i clear my throat, cough, and say, "no, i am fine, i just need a drink of water. can i get a drink of water?" i turn and see the lady with the phone pinched between her shoulder pad and her cheek. i can see foundation caked all over the back of the handset, lipstick streaking the mouthpiece. i can smell her five pack a day habit from across the room.

she nods toward the water cooler, then continues with her conversation. i feel the tickle of a thousand imagined stares as i slowly walk to the cooler, slide a paper cup from the stack, press down on the light blue spigot, and drink lukewarm water. i crush the cup, turn, and walk back to my computer.

on the screen, the computer says:

ARBEIT MACHT FREI.

i turn to the guy sitting next to me shaking his head at the microsoft word simulation and nearly ask him if he's fucked with my computer, but i don't, i just turn back to my own, finger the mouse, and click on STRONGLY DISAGREE.

**IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS, I HAVE
FRATERNIZED WITH DRUG USERS,
HOMOSEXUALS, DEVIANTS AND/OR HEATHENS.**

my head really hurts, and my brow is harvesting greasy balls of sweat that drool down the crow's feet at the corners of my eyes and mingle with my uncried tears. this is fucking weird. i don't know why i am even bothering with this fucking test. i don't want a job this bad. i just want to go back to hilary's house and sit in her warm queen size bed and pull the pale green comforter up to my chin and look at the plants swaying in the breeze of her overhead fan.

i click on SOMETIMES AGREE.

**IT IS RIGHT AND GOOD AND PATRIOTIC TO WORK
MY WHOLE LIFE FOR A SERIES OF CORPORATIONS
THAT CARE NOTHING FOR MY HUMANITY,
THEN DIE QUIETLY WITHOUT A STRUGGLE.**

gotta get that gold watch, get that retirement plan set up while you're young, get those gold clubs out of the garage and get those tired bones in the suburban and head for the course with the other cast-offs, gotta watch "matlock" until your hand clutches at your chest and your wife says, "honey, you okay?"

the american dream is simply a means of keeping you numb while you log into the hivemind and keep busy for 65 years. after they unplug you, they don't give a shit what happens as long as you don't make a scene, don't embarrass us, don't make us think of our own mortality.

i click STRONGLY DISAGREE.

**I BEAR ONLY A PASSING RESEMBLANCE
TO THE PERSON I THINK I AM, AND NONE
AT ALL TO THE PERSON I COULD BE.**

like i need a fucking outdated computer program to tell me this shit, like i need anyone to tell me what i already know, what is so painfully

obvious. how could anyone in this society do anything but click on STRONGLY AGREE?

i click on STRONGLY DISAGREE.

WHAT I CALL LOVE IS ACTUALLY FEAR OF BEING ALONE.

fuck this. i am so out of here. i don't even read the questions anymore, they're all a blur. i just lay my clammy forehead on my palm and click the mouse in the same spot, hovering over STRONGLY DISAGREE. i don't care what the questions ask, i don't care what my answers reveal about my inner workings, i just want this fucking horrid test to be over, i just want to go home, i just...

"sir?"

i lift my head and look to the sound of the voice to my left, and there is the employment agent with the five pack a day breath so close to my face i can see the little red veins squiggle at the corners of her eyeballs.

i say, "hmmm?"

she says, "sir, your test is over. you're all done."

i look at the screen, it says, "TEST COMPLETE."

i ask her, "uhmmm... how'd i do?"

she says, "well, let's see." she walks back to her desk to the printer near her terminal and pulls a sheet of paper from it, looks it over, then walks back to me smiling.

"looks like you did great!" she says, nodding to the paper in her hand. "says here you qualify for just about any job we have. congratulations! check in with us on monday, and i am sure we can place you in a job."

i stand up, shake her hand, and walk toward the front door.

HYPNOPHOBIA (2001)

i've been thinking about sleep, something that doesn't come easy for me... seems like an odd thing to fear, doesn't it, to fear the act of falling asleep?

sometimes there's nothing better than collapsing in your soft, warm bed at the end of the day, just burying your head in the flannel comfort of your down pillow, grabbing a kitty for warmth, and fading off to sleep.

and yet, sometimes, lots of times, falling asleep is one of the most frightening things i experience, and i experience it on a daily basis, so, yeah, hypnophobia is some fucked up shit.

i suppose it's directly related to an intense fear of death, which, really, can stop me in my tracks any time of the day or night — oh jesus, i am going to die someday and there's nothing i can do about it, oh jesus, oh jesus — and i have actually gotten faint at the thought of it, had to pull over to the side of the road and put my head between my legs until the gathering blackness at the corner of my eyes has receded, until the dizziness and intense instinct to run screaming into traffic has passed. yeah, fear of death has a lot to do with it, i imagine, as if the act of losing conscienceness is simply a daily exercise in what it's like to die.

(even peter murphy called sleep “a close cousin to death.”)

it first hit me in the darkest of dark hours during my sophomore year in high school, when i had no friends and my dad was a raging asshole and i had been kicked down to dumb-level english for getting bad grades in college prep english (the shame!). i had a dream that my heart stopped, and in the dream i ran home crying and beating on my chest trying to kick-start my heart. in the end, i collapsed on the floor of the kitchen and felt faint and blacked out, and BOOM, suddenly, i am awake, SNAP, like that, breathing hard and sweaty with fear.

two weeks or so later, i was in the grips of a mighty bad case of pneumonia, and i was sweaty with a 104-degree tempeature, and i was lying there in bed listening to my wrist heartbeat through the tip of my fingers, just this pleasing little engine purr thump thump thump thump...

...then it stopped. i FELT my heart stop, right there, and i sprang from the bed trying desperately to find a heartbeat, and there was none, nothing, my heart had stopped, just like in the dream, and i totally freaked out and ran down the hallway toward the kitchen where my father was, stumbled and held to the wall with one hand and hit my chest with the other to restart my heart, yelling in a rasp, “dad! my heart stopped! help me, my heart stopped!”

my dad was on the phone at the time, and here i come running into the kitchen pale as a ghost in my sweat-drenched tightly whitey underwears,

screaming that my heart had stopped. as he stood there and laughed at me (LAUGHED!), i fell to my knees and was about to pass out from hyperventilation, my breathing trip-hammer fast and shallow, hands quaking, and my dad, he's standing there laughing at me and telling me to calm down, obviously my heart hadn't stopped, just calm down and breath before i pass out and shit all over myself. he pushed me to the ground and told me to breath, all the while talking to someone on the phone and laughing at his hallucinating son with a 104-degree pneumonia-induced fever.

i just laid there twitching and grabbing at my chest, and the pain, god, it was horrible, like this squeezing tightness, this punch in the chest.

of course, i didn't have a heart attack, it was just the fever making me freak out, but ever since then — and this was when i was 15, which was... jesus... nearly 20 years ago — ever since then i have had this painful fear of sleeping, as if relaxing enough to sleep would make my heart stop.

for weeks after my fever dream heart attack, i couldn't go to sleep without a struggle. i would twitch and flick my foot, roll and twist in the covers, leap out of bed light-headed and sure that my heart was stopping because i had stopped moving long enough for it to wind down. i would get up and pace around the living room couch, go outside and pace in circles around the backyard... my dad was an asshole and said that i was just trying to get attention — he even accused me of being on drugs — but my mom was worried by my constant twitching and the blackened raccoon eyes i was cultivating. she eventually took me to a psychologist and, with tears in her eyes, begged him to figure out what was wrong with me.

i remember that he found that i was a fairly normal kid, but said that i was a "40-year-old trapped in a 15-year-old's body." he made a phone call and got me taken out of dumb-head english and put me into gifted english, which was one step above college prep, then told my dad that a lot of my problems stemmed from my relationship with him. my father was pissed, and never took me back to the psychologist.

my problems sleeping have continued ever since, ebbing and flowing depending on the stress in my life. i seem to have a much easier time sleeping if i'm in bed with someone, and i have chosen to extend failing relationships before simply so that i wouldn't have to sleep alone.

when i'm all by myself, falling asleep sucks. i hate it, the feeling of losing conscienceness, of feeling awareness bleed off like a severed vein. sometimes i can control it and just get down to the business of falling asleep, but other times i have to wait, wait until i get so tired that i basically lose the fight and finally fall asleep.

i imagine death will be like that, this struggle against the gathering darkness, then a final deep breath where you say "fuck it" and you finally

let it take you because you are too tired to fight it anymore.

(the only difference between being dead and being asleep is waking up... only then do you know whether or not you have been sleeping instead of dead, only then do you realize that you have had dreams, only then do you know you have made it through another night. death is like sleeping without ever waking up to realize it.)

i still twitch, although i try to control it. i still get freaked out about my heartbeat, and can't listen to it for more than a few seconds without getting scared and light-headed.

sometimes, i wake up violently in the middle of the night, leaping out of bed and grabbing at my chest and wheezing for breath, wild-eyed and sure that i have been snapped out of sleep by a heart attack. this has happened many times while i was sleeping next to someone, and it was always scared the fuck out of them... and me...

it's perfectly horrible when it happens when i'm alone. i never know if i will survive it... i don't know if it's some kind of sleep apnea, where i stop breathing during sleep and my body has to jolt itself awake in order to start breathing again, or if it's intensely bad dreams that i can never remember, or what... all i know is that is sucks and it happens a couple times a month, especially if i sleep alone.

it's easier with the kitties...

sometimes...

try to look up the word "hypnophobia" or the phrase "fear of sleep" on the internet, and you can never find anything other than the definition. no support groups, no information, nothing. it makes me feel like i'm the only one in the whole world who deals with it.

yeah, hypnophobia sucks. i am dreadfully afraid of going to the dentist to get my teeth fixed, not for the pain, no, i fear the dentist because i don't ever want to be knocked out with sleeping gas.

i fear the not waking up part.

THE HEARTBREAKING STORY OF A BOY AND HIS DOG (2001)

here's the story about my best friend in the whole wide world, the very best friend i ever had in the my whole life: a german shepherd named chinook.

i first met chinook when i was 10 and living in bremerton, washington (which, oddly enough, is just across the puget sound from where i am typing this journal entry — i can see it outside the 14th story window of the my building.)

my father came home angry as usual. he yelled at me to get downstairs to my room. i had no idea what he was angry about, as usual, so i just went to my room to await my fate...

...and there, sitting on my bed in a pile of blankets and pillows, was a german shepherd puppy. i can not even begin to think of a better pet for a lonely 10-year-old boy than a puppy. as i cooed and played with him, my parents watched quietly over my shoulder from the doorway.

we named him sasquatch because he had such big feet. he was a good puppy, but as he grew, his hips started getting all messed up. german shepherds, apparently, have a high incidence of something called 'hip dysplasia,' or something like that, and whatever it was, sasquatch had it bad. so my parents bought a brand new puppy and named him chinook, and for a while we had two growing puppies.

i'm telling you, little kid bliss is having not just one but two puppies.

but sasquatch got worse and worse, and finally my parents put the poor thing to sleep. i remember my father taking me for a walk on halloween of that year, his arms crooked around my skinny shoulders, and explaining to me why we had to put sasquatch to sleep.

that left chinook.

i am telling you this because it's true: never have a boy and his dog been closer than me and chinook. i had no friends then because we moved around every six months, sometimes more frequently than that. i went to three different elementary schools in two different states just to complete fourth grade, and i was really shy, painfully shy. chinook became my very best and closest friend, my only confidante, and we played from the time i got off school until it was time for bed and all day on weekends.

chinook was hella cool. he'd pull me down the road on my skateboard. we'd wrestle, and he would sometimes grab me up with his mouth, but he would never bite me. one time, he accidentally clamped down on me hard enough to make me squeak, but he was so sorry about it, just hanging his head and looking at me with those deep brown eyes, like, "dude, i

am SO sorry about that. c'mere and put me in a headlock and let's play some more."

he'd go out and get the newspaper on cold, foggy mornings, but then he'd run past you and into the kitchen to where we kept the milkbone dog biscuits on the dryer. if you tried to grab the newspaper before rewarding him with a dog bone, he would turn his head and not let you take it. if you said, "get that fly!" he would start looking around for bugs and whining like, "fly? what fly? where? i'm gonna FUCK that fly UP?"

one of our favorite games to play was hide and go seek, where i would tell him to "stay!" on the couch and then i would hide somewhere in the house with a milk bone dog biscuit in my hand. once i was hidden, i would call his name — "chinook! chinook! chinook! — and i would hear the dangle of his dogtags as he ran into the hallway to find me. i'd always position myself in such a way that i could watch chinook trying to find me, and this would always crack me up. he had such an expressive face, and he'd be standing there cocking his eyebrows with intense concentration, trying to listen or smell me out. i'd always end up giving myself away by giggling, then he'd be all like, "so! there you are!" and come and get me and nuzzle up on me and knock me over and we'd wrestle until i gave him his milk bone.

we'd also play "race to get the ball" where i'd have him "sit!" and "stay!" and i would cross the backyard and put two tennis balls in the far corner of the lawn, then i would slowly walk back into position beside him, whispering, "stay... stay..." then boom, i would haul ass to the balls and chinook would be in hot pursuit. he'd always swoop past me to get one of the balls, but then i would grab the other and flaunt the fact that i had a ball, "nyahh nyahh, you can HAVE that other dumb old tennis ball because this one is SO much better, la la la, la la la," and this would get chinook's goat, man, he hated that i was having so much fun with my ball, so he'd drop his ball and tackle me and we'd wrestle while he tried to get the other ball. sometimes he'd end up with two or even three balls in his mouth, and he looked so ridiculous trying to bogart all the tennis balls in his mouth at the same time.

whenever i got together with kids in the open fields near my home to play war in the water-pipe trenches where they were building new houses, chinook was always on my team, and all the kids wanted chinook to be on their team, too, because he was so good and finding little hiding kids on the prowl and rattling them out so that the rest of our team could swoop down with our stick/machine guns for the kill.

chinook was the best dog in the whole world.

(you can probably tell that something horribly heart-breaking is about to happen. such are stories about boys and their dogs.)

fast forward five years, and chinook is five and i am a high school sophomore. it is 1983. i am not actually dating girls at this point, girls are way too scary, and besides, it's hard to keep a girlfriend and a raging dungeons and dragons habit at the same time. chinook is still my very best friend, and he sleeps with me every night in my waterbed.

and chinook is still fit and healthy and spry, although he doesn't run nearly as fast as he used to. it's those damned german shepherd hips, but he's not bad off, just a little stiff after a run. he's got a little grey in his beard. my dad decides out of nowhere that chinook deserves to get laid at least once in his life, so he buys a female german shepherd puppy named brandi, and before she turns a year old, she has puppies.

i am now a junior in high school, and brandi has a litter of puppies who are given very quickly to good homes, but my parents decide to keep one of the males, who they name teddy bear.

well, another year goes by, and i am a senior and chinook is 7 and brandi is 2 and teddy bear is 1, and for the first time in his life, chinook has to deal with another male dog being in the house. he does not take well to this, and he and teddy bear butt heads quite a few times. rather than finding teddy bear a good home, my father forces me to keep chinook — an 80-pound german shepherd — locked in my room all day to keep him separated from teddy bear, only to be let out under strict supervision when teddy bear is locked away somewhere else.

looking back at this, it seems so fucking ridiculous, keeping such a big dog locked in a small room all day, then escorting him to the backyard like some convict who needs exercise. but it made sense to my dad. looking back at it, it was totally unfair to make it my responsibility to keep the two dogs apart, and totally unfair to chinook to have to be cooped up all day, but at the time... what could i do?

inevitably, the day came when chinook got out. he must've been waiting at my bedroom door, just waiting until i opened it, and when i did he dashed out between my legs and lunged into the living room to attack teddy bear. they launched into this horrific fight, and they tore into each other. it was ferocious, and they bounced off furniture and walls and skittered into the kitchen.

by the time my dad jumped into the middle of it, there was blood everywhere and their coats were matted with saliva. i was too hysterical to do anything, but my dad separated them, but not before one of them took a big chunk out of his arm. we finally pried them apart and my dad got rushed to the hospital, but not before he yelled at me and berated me for allowing chinook to get out, and he swore that i would pay because now he was going to put my dog to sleep and it was all my fault.

why couldn't he just have found teddy bear a new home? but no, he had

to retaliate at me and do something specifically to get back at me, which was to take away my best and only friend.

i remember the day my dad took chinook away very clearly. i was crying and my dad was pissed off and yelling at me, and chinook was reacting to the yelling like he always did, by lowering his head and his eyes and his ears as if he just knew the yelling had something to do with him or something he had done.

the last thing my father said before he took my dog away was this, and i quote, verbatim: "give your goddamned dog a hug because this is the last time you'll ever see him."

he actually said that to me... no, he screamed it at me. and i was drooling with tears... i gave chinook a hug and told him it was okay (i lied) and then i slipped his dog tags over his head and put them in my pocket. that was it... my father lead him away and slammed the door behind him.

i never saw him again.

(deep breath)

and it doesn't stop there. no, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, it gets worse.

(deep breath)

so, for those of you who are keeping score at home, we are now down one german shepherd dog, but we still have brandi and teddy bear and one black cat named gato, who hated everyone except me, so it was always my duty to take care of him.

i signed up to join the navy when i was 17, then as soon as i turned 18 and graduated, i left home for a six-year stint as an electronics technician. shortly after i left, my parents and my younger sister sabrina moved to another house, whereupon gato "ran away."

i always felt that gato had disappeared under suspicious circumstances and had suspected foul play, and a few years later i got my sister to admit that gato had indeed "been put to sleep."

two down, two to go.

ah, but wait! in the meantime, a pregnant momma cat had taken up residence under the back decking and had given birth to a bunch of kitties. so the new total is: 2 german shepherds; and 5 cats.

my parents promptly moved to wichita, kansas, and take the whole brood with them. but there are problems from the beginning with the cats. it seems that the momma cat and one of her brood are very close, but the remaining three cats hate them, so, once again, they have to keep everyone separated, and yes, rather than finding good homes for some of the cats, my parents decide to put three of the cats to sleep.

new total: 2 dogs, 2 cats.

the dogs have, by this time, become permanent outside dogs, and they

are kept locked up in the dog run all day long. although they get lots of exercise running back and forth along the fence and wrestling with each other, they never get taken on walks, are never invited into the house, and are generally ignored by my parents.

the thing about kansas is that they have big weather there, and the lightening is huge and fearce, and so every time there is a lightening storm, the dogs get so freaked out that they tear a hole in the fence in an effort to get into the house where it's safe. after fixing the fence several times and even installing an electric fence to keep them penned up, my parents come to the same conclusion they have become so good at: they put these two dogs, two full-grown healthy young dogs in the prime of life, they put them down, put them to sleep.

that leaves two cats, who, by this time, are probably like, "i don't know about you, but i ain't scratching SHIT. i ain't doing nothing but sitting here and purring and being scarce. they want me to purr, fuck it, i am a purring mother fucker. it's like fucking auschwitz around here..."

(and now comes the insult to injury part of our story.)

a few years go by, and i am out of the navy and in college and doing my poetry thang. i get a phone call from my mom. she tells me, "guess what? your dad just brought home a brand new german shepherd puppy? he just LOVES him so much, and guess, just GUESS, what he's going to call him?"

i close my eyes and grit my teeth and think, please, no, don't...

"he's going to call him chinook! isn't that cute?"

i just stare slack-jawed into the receiver of the phone, then i say, "well, i hope the dog has a better fate in store than my chinook."

my mom clucked her tongue at the notion, and said, "now, don't be like that. you know it practically KILLED your father to put that poor dog to sleep. you remember how bad his hips hurt!"

"no mom," i said, "his hips didn't hurt like that. you didn't know him like i did. if you knew him like i did, you wouldn't say such a thing."

now they have two german shepherds, one male named chinook and one female named nikki, plus they still have the two cats, named baby and princess. apparently, they all get along great, and they are all inside pets. they get to sleep anywhere they want, and my father lavishes affection on the dogs in a way that makes my stomach hurt...

...that hurt feels like jealousy on one hand, but it also feels like an old anger that i think i might always have. how someone could treat a family dog — a fucking member of the family — like an old piece of furniture that you don't fancy anymore, like some kind of refuse to be taken to the dump, is something i will never understand.

FINAL NOTE: i always kept chinook's dog tags in my truck for good

luck, and i can safely say that i have never had a major accident since then.

about two years ago, i was doing a gig in san francisco with a group of kick ass lesbian poets called sister spit, and someone broke into my truck during the show. i got in my car and noticed right away that everything was all fucked up... the window had been broken, the papers and shit had been over-turned, the glovebox was hanging ajar... and i didn't think about all the cds i had in cases under my seat... nope. i didn't think about anything other than chinook's dog tags. i opened the center console where i had kept them since the last day we looked into each other's eyes, and the tags and the collar were gone.

losing all my cds was bad enough... over 600 disappeared in one snatch, but i can always buy more. it was my own damn fault that they were in the car in the first place. but the dog tags? man... i tell you, if even half the curses i cast upon the motherfucker who took my dog's tags came true, there is at least one extremely sad bastard in this world who has been hurtin' for certain ever since.

i sometimes miss chinook a lot, even now. if there ever was a better dog in this entire world, i've yet to meet him.

i sometimes wonder if the same dynamic that existed between chinook and teddy bear was in effect with me and my father as i grew up...

FINGERING THOSE EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS (2001)

so, on their last night here in seattle, my parents took me and my friend morris stegosaurus to the space needle for dinner.

nice, that.

so, we're deciding on what we should eat, looking at this way expensive menu that's attached with wires to a slab of aluminum, and there in the soups/appetizers section is the following:

"crab bisque."

(cue sound of emotional trigger finger flexing, pulling the hammer back, cocking the memory gun...)

and suddenly, in the middle of ordering my dinner with morris and my parents in the rotating restaurant on top of the space needle, i start thinking about jen.

jen died in a car accident on sept. 10, 1999.

when we were dating in the summer of 1999, which was during my internship at the reno gazette-journal, we often visited her mom in sacramento. her mom's name was linda, and she was a high-paid executive with intel who made hella money and lived in a really big house in a really nice part of town. linda used to take jen and me to a nice restaurant when we'd visit, and i'd always order the crab bisque as a first course before the entree.

god, i can not emphasize enough how powerfully good this crab bisque was. it's like a creamy soup, with fresh tomatoes and crab and all kinds of seasonings blended together for a frothy concoction that... god, just thinking about it makes my mouth water. i would be rendered incapable of conversation every time i ate that crab bisque, and i would have to resist the temptation to order another round of it.

after jen died, i stopped seeing our mutual friends, and i avoided seeing linda or jen's sister lindsay for a long time. it was too hard. i guess i didn't want to be reminded about it, i just wanted it to go away...

finally, linda e-mailed me and asked me to come to sacramento and have lunch with her. she had met with all of jen's friends over lunch in the recent weeks, and i was the last one left. i think she was trying to sort of live vicariously through the stories that jen's friends could tell, sort of getting a rounder, fuller picture of this amazing 20-year-old woman who had been her daughter, patching together stories and inside jokes and anecdotes...

we met at the same restaurant that she had always taken jen and me to, and, as usual, i ordered the crab bisque.

it was so odd... i had never been in that restaurant without jen sitting next to me, holding my hand under the table, our hips touching in warm little ovals. it seemed so wrong to be there without her...

(the last time i was here, i was with jen. she was still alive.)

her mom couldn't handle it, and broke down as soon as we ordered our food. her mascara was running down her face as she asked me to share stories about jen and me. we had only dated for about six months, and it was a situation where we had enormous and immediate crushes on each other... my most powerful memories about jen were not exactly the sort you can share with a mother, but i tried to give her a feel for how it was with the two of us. i told stories about how we met at a poetry slam, how jen had liquored me up with heinekens so that i wouldn't be too nervous to kiss her for the first time, told her how instantly perfect that first kiss was, talked about her blossoming feminism, our roadtrips, her laughter and smile...

linda then said that she was going to ask me something and that she wanted me to give her a straight-forward, truthful answer, even if it was hard.

she asked me if jen had loved her. she was afraid that jen hadn't loved her at all, that she had hated her, and she wanted me to tell the truth:

had jen loved her?

god... how do you answer such a question? we both started crying, and before i answered, the waiter brought linda's appetizer and my crab bisque.

and i wiped my eyes, and dipped my spoon into the crab bisque, then lifted a hot sip to my mouth.

and i told linda that, of course, jen loved her, of course she did, she was her daughter, and she loved her very much. in fact, i said, i knew very little about her dad at all because jen almost never talked about her dad, but about her mother i knew a lot. i knew how hard she had worked right out of high school, how she had worked her way up through the company, how she was an inspiration to jen, how she showed that a talented, motivated woman could accomplish anything she set her mind to.

and linda just smiled and cried and buried her face in her hands...

...and i just didn't know what to do or say, i just felt like such shit, because here is this woman who has lost her brightest shining light of a daughter, and what in the world can i say?

so, i took another sip of the crab bisque.

and i'm sitting there across the table as linda is crying and talking about how hard it has been since her daughter's funeral, and i'm listening intently, but inside my head...

...all i can think about is how absolutely wonderful this crab bisque

tastes. i mean, it is so good, like, not just GOOD, but so FUCKING good, you know, like it's the very best soup i have ever tasted in my whole entire life, and it was so overwhelming to deal with the duality of that moment, of feeling the horrible weight of loss from jen's death and all that entailed to me, of imagining how it must feel for her mother to contemplate the loss of her eldest child, and on top of that dealing with being really hungry and not being able to keep myself from digging in to this crab bisque like a starving animal.

i would be like, "linda, you know she loved you very much," (sip... goddamn this is good soup), "and you know, she wasn't afraid to share it with anyone. i mean, jen was an amazing and inspiring person, and she credited much of what she knew and loved with you," (sip... fuck, man, this soup is just kicking my ass... sip, sip).

we talked for at least an hour about jen, and eventually, we got up and walked to our cars and hugged each other warmly, leaving tear stains on each others shoulders. and i cried so hard as i drove away, thinking about how the last time i left this place, i was in jen's car, and we were going back to her mom's place to have sex in her bedroom...

...and as i drove away, i distinctly remember trying to get the name of the restaurant so that i could come back and get their recipe for the crab bisque.

i haven't seen her mom since then, and it's been more than a year.
so hard...

and so, last night, i am in the rotating restaurant on the very tip top of the space needle with morris and my parents, and there on the menu in the appetizers section is "crab bisque."

i looked at it...

(heavy pause)

(the world rotates slowly around us as the restaurant turns and turns...)

and i ordered the salmon cakes with mustard sauce.

and they were delicious.

and i dreamed of jen that night for the first time in a long, long time.

WHY I AM A FEMINIST (2001)

(I'd like to reprint a piece that I was asked to write for Bust Magazine's issue devoted to feminism. Bust is a kick ass glossy zine written by young women for young women. You can check it out at www.bust.com, or get a copy at your local chain bookstore. I am really down with this mag because it speaks to young women without talking down to them and without reducing their entire being to stupid shit like makeup and the latest shows on the WB. If you've never seen it, you should definitely check it out.)

I am a straight white male.

I am also a feminist, straight up, with buttons on my little black backpack that say "Another man against violence against women" and "Stop the war on women" and "Keep your fucking laws off my body," which are right along side my Lilith Fair patch and my Ani DiFranco buttons and my "Corporate rock sucks" keychain.

I have a tattoo on my right ankle of the female symbol with a fist in the middle, which I call the "femi-fist," that represents to me the fight for a woman's right to be a woman in this society without being raped or objectified or cheated out of living life to its fullest potential simply because she doesn't have a penis.

Now, picture me sitting at a gender conference at my little university in Northern California, and picture that I am one of only four young men in a room full of 120 young women at this particular seminar led by Kate Bornstein, the original gender warrior, and picture me asking Kate what she recommends I do as a straight white male who is down with feminism to help the cause of women's rights.

Picture the red-faced young feminist in the third row standing up and saying to me in a very loud voice, "But this is not your fight! You are a part of the very society that is causing all of our problems! You are a card-carrying member of the ruling class, and you can conveniently pull out your support of feminism the moment it becomes inconvenient to you! You can't just ride in here on your white horse and save us women! We have to do it ourselves! This is not your fight."

Now, picture me, earrings in both ears, black nail polish on my fingertips, shaved head, steel-toed boots, and looking every bit the part of a Wussy Boy college student.

This is not my fight?

Sister, I beg to differ. I am a feminist not only because I support the rights of women to live their lives without harassment and the contempt of a male-driven consumer society that churns out unhealthy images of women and profits from the resulting self-esteem problems, although

that is part of it. I am not a feminist just because the most important people in my life are women—my mom, my sister, my girlfriends, my best friends, my classmates, my writing partners, my confidantes, my teammates—and whatever affects them also affects me, although that’s part of it.

Most of all, I am a feminist because as long as this society hates and abuses women, it also hates and abuses me.

Seriously.

I have been harassed for being a Wussy Boy for as long as I can remember, being called a “fag” for walking down the street with earrings and hair dye in full effect and thrift store polyester shirts flapping in the breeze. I have been chased down and beaten up for being a “pussy” simply because I grew up playing Double-Dutch jump rope and street corner hopscotch instead of knocking heads with the jocks at football and getting greasy under the hoods of tricked-out Cameros.

Everything I’ve ever been passionate about has caused the “card-carrying He-Men” of this world to wanna kick my ass for not being man enough, for being too girly, and thereby worthy of their contempt. In high school, when the He-Men were listening to Van Halen and Skid Row and Warrant and Ozzy Osbourne, I was quietly headphoning my way through music that would brand me a “fag”—like The Cure and Morrissey and Siouxsie and The Banshees and Depeche Mode and the soundtrack to *The Breakfast Club*.

When the He-Men saw role models on the big screen in machos like Tom Cruise in *Top Gun* and Bruce Willis in *Die Hard* and pasted posters of surgically enhanced fashion models all over their rooms, I was a hard core fan of Duckie Dale in *Pretty in Pink* and thought it would be really cool to befriend Winona Ryder in *Beatlejuice*.

I mean, just because I like poetry more than *Sports Illustrated* doesn’t mean I should be treated like shit. Just because I don’t go out drinking at Hooters with a bunch of buffed-out testosterone junkies doesn’t mean that I’m less of a man. Just because I don’t attach my masculinity to assinine crap like big cars and big gold watches and big blonde fashion mannequins with big fake breasts doesn’t mean I’m gay. Just because my girlfriend doesn’t wear makeup and would rather wear steel-toed combat boots instead of high-heeled stilettos and can kick my ass doesn’t mean she’s a dyke, and it doesn’t mean I’m pussy-whipped.

All of which is why I see feminism as being not only a fight for women’s rights, but also for the rights of any human being who wants to live his or her life outside of the narrow-minded patriarchal gender norms foisted upon them by this jacked up society. Same thing goes for gay rights: I march every chance I get for a gay person’s right to be

who they are without threat of physical violence, not only because gay people are some of my very closest and best friends, but also because a lot of people see me and assume I'm gay and treat me the same way they would a gay person—which isn't very well.

Feminism *is* my fight. In fact, until more men get involved in this fight and march in Take Back the Night marches and participate in gender studies programs and help create masculine identities for our male children that allow them to express themselves in a tender and passionate manner rather than by resorting to hyper-masculinity and misogyny and homophobia to prove themselves “real men,” then nothing will change at all. You might have a nation of enlightened women ready to kick some ass and change the world, but the very people who run this world will just be standing there with their arms crossed.

I am Wussy Boy, hear me roar!

HAIKU

sleep is a lover
spurned. she has stopped returning
my late night phone calls.

electricity
arcs in tendrils between our
tesla coiled bodies

this road trails behind
black asphalt spine connecting
your brain stem to mine

sun-lazy cat on
shady grass inspires envy
through office windows

tiny fists pound their
sorrow on the tear-stained ground
outside our window

shoe print. paw print. cane.
shoe print. paw print. cane. leaf. leaf.
autumn in concrete.

driving into the
sun, the souls of dead insects
pollack our windshield

my lover's skin smells
warm like pumpkin spice and rain.
i hold her. she sleeps.

grassgrassgrassgrassgrass
grassgrassgrasssnakegrassgrassgrass
grassgrassgrassgrassgrass

swollen lips of sky
spit rain at passing traffic.
man holds sign: need food.

let's pull apart the
fresh bread of our hearts and feed
it to each other

man orders, "the veal."
waitress says, "we're outta veal."
man sighs, scans menu.

broken blue bottle.
early morning light puddles.
pale blue sun on wall.

old cigarette butt.
dirty black gutter water.
little kid follows.

early morning sun
catches in dewdrop prisms
on dead gutter bird.

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moonlit lovers mix
their moans with water rushing
over river stones

she drifts and floats like
incense smoke, hips of flame and
eyes of candle wax.

we press our bodies
together so tightly our
ribs become tangled.

my cock is a soft
ball of yarn, and your mouth is
a playful kitten.

Big Poppa E is a performance poet from Austin, TX, by way of Chico, CA. He is the co-founder of the performance poetry troupe Broken Word with fellow Austin poets Matthew John Conley and Hilary Thomas, the former being an amazing poet he's known since the Taos Poetry Circus in '96 and the latter being an amazing poet he met during the SlamAmerica Bus Tour in the summer of '00. BPE was a member of the '99 San Francisco Poetry Slam Team, co-champions of the '99 National Poetry Slam in Chicago and the only undefeated team out of 48 that year. BPE has appeared on HBO's "Def Poetry" and BET's "The Way We Do It," has been featured in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Los Angeles Times (among others), and was even on 60 Minutes for about two seconds. BPE has challenged himself to perform poetry in each of the 50 states, and so far he was 32 states down (including Alaska). That leaves 18 states. Hawaii might be a bit hard, but he will keep trying. BPE did poetry in a Dutch movie once. It was called "P.O.V." He has never seen it, but it starred Trine Durholm, who was the star of the Cannes Film Festival fave "The Celebration," so it might have been a big deal in Denmark. Maybe he's famous there. Maybe people would just walk up to him on the street and give him nice things. Not like here, where people knock him down on the sidewalk and kick him into the gutter and take his wallet. Stupid George W. Bush. BPE has also appeared in the pages of Poets and Writers Magazine, Bust Magazine, and Ms. Magazine, who called him "an icon for effeminate males." He was even interviewed one time on the Australian Broadcasting Company radio program called "Triple J Radio," which then lead to his being featured in the Sydney Morning Herald despite the fact that he's never stepped foot in Australia. Maybe he's famous there, too, not like here where he can't even get a seat at Denny's. BPE was also once featured in The Daily News in London, which is in England, which then lead to his almost being interviewed by the BBC, but it kinda fell through because of some stupid war thing, so maybe he's not so famous in the U.K., but you never know. Stupid George W. Bush. BPE has two kitties named Aretha and Thelonious. They are the best road kitties in the whole wide world. Theo does this thing where he jumps into BPE's arms when he thumps his chest. That's so fucking cool. I've never seen that before.

THE MORAL ABC'S OF BIG POPPA E'S MAGIC POETRY

AD-LIBBING IS BAD. FOLLOW YOUR SCRIPT. ADMIT IT... YOU ENJOY BEING A TARGET MARKET. ADOLPH HITLER. JOSEPH STALIN. POL POT. RONALD MCDONALD. ALL OF YOUR HAPPINESS IS BEHIND YOU. ANGER IS A COP-OUT. DO SOMETHING. ASSIMILATION OR EXTINCTION. YOUR CHOICE. BE A GOOD AMERICAN. BUY STUFF. BLAME EVERYONE BUT YOURSELF. BLINK, AND SUDDENLY YOU'RE 30. CAMERAS ARE EVERYWHERE. CENSORSHIP IS GOOD FOR YOUR SOUL. CHRISTIANITY IS A PRISON. BREAK FREE. CORPORATE SPONSORED REBELLION IS JUST SILLY. CORPORATIONS POISON US WITH NOSTALGIA. COSMO AND VOGUE ARE NOT WOMEN'S MAGAZINES. THEY ARE MISOGYNIST PROPAGANDA. DON'T GET LEFT BEHIND. DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TIME TO MOVE ON WITH YOUR LIFE? DRUGS ARE STUPID. SO IS GOD. EVE WAS FRAMED. EVERY PHOTO YOU TAKE REMOVES YOU FROM REALITY. EVERYBODY ELSE IS CRAZY. EVERYBODY WANTS A PILL. EVERYONE KNOWS, EXCEPT YOU. EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR MOUTH IS THINLY VEILED BULLSHIT DESIGNED TO MAKE PEOPLE LIKE YOU, BUT IT ONLY ALIENATES YOU EVEN FURTHER. EVERYTHING YOU BELIEVE HAS BEEN PAID FOR. FAILURE HURTS. DOESN'T IT? FEMINISM IS NOT A BUTTON ON YOUR BACKPACK. IT'S A TATTOO. FORESTS ARE DESTROYED TO MAKE ROOM FOR YOUR FAT ASS. FRATERNITIES CORRAL THE ENEMY FOR EASY ELIMINATION. FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS GROW UP. FUCK E-MAIL. JUST TALK TO ME. GENDER IS A LIE. GET BACK IN LINE. GOD IS A ROCK STAR. HATRED IS A WASTE OF ENERGY. HE HASN'T THOUGHT ABOUT YOU IN A LONG TIME. HEAR THAT? THEY'RE LAUGHING AT YOU AGAIN. HEROIN. VICADIN. NOVACAIN. LOVE. HOW CAN YOU SLEEP AT NIGHT? IF LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS, SQUEEZE LEMON JUICE IN HIS FUCKING EYE. IF YOU ARE NOT A SKINNY WHITE GIRL, YOU ARE NOTHING. IS THE MEDIA A BRIDGE TO REALITY OR A WALL? IS YOUR LIFE WORTHY OF A BOOK? A FILM? A COMMERCIAL? IT DOESN'T GET ANY BETTER THAN THIS. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU WANT. DO WHAT YOU ARE TOLD. IT'S A SHAME HOW YOU WASTE YOUR CREATIVITY. IT'S ALL THAT CASHIER'S FAULT. BE RUDE TO THEM. JESUS HAD A PENIS. JESUS HAD A VULVA. JUST SAY NO TO POETRY. LABELS ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. LOVE IS A PLACEBO. LOVE IS DUMB. LUST IS MORE EFFICIENT THAN LOVE. MARRIAGE IS A BRANDING IRON. MARY WAS RAPED. MEG RYAN IS SATAN'S TOOL. MISOGYNY IS A WEAK MAN'S WAY OF RECOGNIZING SUPERIORITY. MONEY PURIFIES. MOST PEOPLE DIE AT ABOUT 70, WHICH MEANS YOU ARE MIDDLE-AGED AT 35. MOST PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH. THEY JUST WANT TO BE HAPPY. MOTHER NATURE KICKS GOD'S ASS. NO ONE BELIEVES YOU. NO ONE FROM HIGH SCHOOL REMEMBERS YOU. NO ONE WILL COME TO YOUR FUNERAL. NO ONE WILL MEET YOU THE NEXT TIME YOU FLY INTO AN AIRPORT. OBEY YOUR MISTRUST. ONE IS A LOT LESS LONELY NUMBER WITH CATS. PAIN CONFIRMS EXISTENCE. PARANOIA IS A SIGN OF INTELLIGENCE. PEARL HARBOR. NORMANDY. IWO JIMA. GUADALCANAL. LOVE. PEDESTALS ROB PEOPLE OF THEIR HUMANITY. PETS FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE AROUND YOU. PLEASE DON'T LOSE YOUR MAGIC. POETRY IS GAY. PRETEND YOU'RE HAPPY SO NO ONE GETS UNCOMFORTABLE. RELIGION WAS INVENTED. RELISH YOUR ANONYMITY. ROMANTIC COMEDIES ARE THE OPIATE OF THE MASSES. RONALD MCDONALD IS MORE RECOGNIZED THAN JESUS. SAD PEOPLE GET THE MOST OUT OF LIFE. SADNESS IS THE ONLY CONSTANT. SEX IS THE ANSWER TO ALL OF YOUR PROBLEMS. SHE CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER YOUR NAME. SHE DOESN'T NEED YOU ANYMORE. SHE NEVER REALLY LOVED YOU. SMILE... YOU'RE A SLAVE... GO BUY A PEPSI. SORORITIES ARE MAN'S WAY OF KEEPING THE WEAKEST WOMEN BRAINWASHED. STRIVE TO BE DIFFERENT. JUST LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE. STRONG WOMEN ARE SCARY. SUFFER IN SILENCE. SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL ONCOLOGIST. EAT MORE FAST FOOD. TABOOS ARE SOCIETY'S WAY OF CONTROLLING YOU. TECHNOLOGY BRINGS PEOPLE CLOSER, LIKE CATTLE. THAT PAIN YOU ARE IGNORING IS PROBABLY CANCER. THAT PERSON YOU HAVE A CRUSH ON IS AFRAID OF YOU. THAT SONG WILL ALWAYS MAKE YOU CRY. THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "THERAPIST" AND "THE RAPIST" IS A LITTLE SPACE. THE ONLY TRUE LOVE IS UNREQUITED LOVE. ALL ELSE IS COMPROMISE. THE WONDER BRA IS A PRISON CELL. THE WORLD IS RUN BY WEAK. INSECURE MEN WHO NEED SPANKINGS. THE WORLD IS YOUR CATWALK. THEY'LL NEVER ALLOW YOU TO BE COOL. THINK GLOBALLY. ACT NONCHALANTLY. TIME FLIES WHEN YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION. TOILETS ARE THE GREAT EQUALIZERS. TRUE LOVE. GREETING CARDS. ROMANTIC COMEDIES. BIGFOOT. VISUALIZE ANARCHY. VOTING IS FOR FOOLS. APATHY CREATES TRUE CHANGE. WALLOW IN YOUR WEAKNESS. WE ARE DROWNING IN A SEA OF STIMULI. WE ARE SLAVES TO CATS. WE CAN SEE RIGHT THROUGH YOU. WE HATE MOST IN OTHERS WHAT WE HATE IN OURSELVES. WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING? WHAT WOULD THEY THINK ABOUT YOUR DIRTY LITTLE SECRET? WANT TO FIND OUT? WHAT YOU THINK IS LOVE IS ACTUALLY FEAR OF BEING ALONE. WHEN YOU DIE THE UNIVERSE GOES WITH YOU. WRISTWATCHES ARE SHACKLES. YOU ARE A GODDESS. YOU ARE IN THE CONTROL GROUP. YOU ARE MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN YOU COULD EVER IMAGINE. YOU ARE NOT INNOCENT. YOU ARE ON DISPLAY. YOU ARE PATIENT ZERO. YOU!!!!!!

ANGER PANGS AND FRUIT BAT FANGS REND AND TORN AND BURST ASUNDER BLUNDER FUNDER PRAISE! FUCKING SUCKING KICK YOUR BUNTING FLYING FLAGS AND SOLDIERS HUNTING DUBYA BUSH IS SATAN'S DUNG HE'S HANGING ON THE LOWEST RUNG HIS ASS A-BLASTING SULFUR FURY NINE INCH NAILS AND IAN DURY RATS A-SCURRY LIMES CURE SCURVY FUCK HAIKU AND FUCK THE BAHAMAS YOU SMELL JUST LIKE FERMENTING LLAMAS SPECIAL OPS IN VIETNAM ME AND MATT IN ALABAMA ROB A BANK AND HIT THE SHAMMA DE JAM HOTTIES IN BAGGY SILK JAMMIES ROLLING TURTLENECK STOGIES WITH CREW CUT HOMIES SCALAWAGS IN DIME-STORE JAGS PATROL THE MOON SMOKING DOOM-LIT FAGS IMBIBING LIFE IN FULL-THROAT GULPS AND CRUSHING SINNERS TO MANGO PULP THE POPE SMOKES HOPES AND DREAMS LIKE PINNERS YOUR GOD IS EATING MY GODDESS FOR DINNER!

CLEANLINESS IS THE LIGHT WITH WHICH ALL POETRY MUST SHINE, AND NO POETRY SHINES WITH THE ABSOLUTED TRUTH OF THE LORD'S SPACESHIP THAN BIG POPPA E'S 100% PURE MAGIC POETRY! HAIL TRUTH! THE PROPHET ARETHA SPAKE UPONE THE MASSES OVER BREAKFAST TACOS AND COCA-COLA: "LO! FISH ARE MADE FOR FRYING! WINGS ARE MADE FOR FLYING! BELLIES ARE MADE FOR PETTING! BEDS ARE MADE FOR WETTING! HANDS ARE MADE FOR PRAYING! FOOLS ARE MADE FOR SLAYING! THE WORDS OF THE PROFITS WERE WRITTEN ON THE STUDIO WALLS! CONCERT HALLS! ECHO WITH THE SOUND OF SALESMEN! OF SALESMEN! OF SALESMEN! BU-GACK!" AND THE WORLD SMILED IN NOTTY PINES! LO!

FOR THE LORD HANDGUN SO DESPISED THIS WRETCHED PLANET THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BESOTTED SON, CHRIST HOLLOW POINT, SO THAT ALL WHO TAKE HIM INTO THEIR BODIES SHALL BE TORN ASUNDER FOREVER AND EVER, HAIL! BOOGA!

BETTIES AND BARNIES TO-ING AND FRO-ING ALONG HACKY SACK BEACHES ALLAH! LIGHT BOULEVARDS IN LOVE DRIVE CADILLAC CONVERTIBLE DRAGONS PISSING OFF MINI-VANS AND STATION WAGONS CATTLE CALL AUDITIONS OF BOTTLE-BLONDE HOPEFULS SWIGGING THE CANCER OF POP CULTURE VULTURES THE BIGGEST THE BRIGHTEST THE TIGHTEST THE WHITEST AND ANDY GIBB RISES A PHOENIX FROM ASHES COPS WITH CAR KEY BUTTER MOUSTACHES WAVE WILLOW BRANCH WONDER WANDS IN BLACK SABBATH MASSES ALABASTER PLASTER CASTER THE STATE OF TEXAS KILL'S 'EM FASTER DEATH ROW HORRORSHOW CRACKER WANNA POLYGRAPH AND JUSTICE FOR ALL? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH! WASHINGTON D.C.'S LIBIDO TOPPEDOS SPORTING SKINS OF NATIONS LIKE THRIFT SHOP TUXEDOS BULLY PULPITS WITH RUSTED TRUMPETS EAT JELLY DONUTS WITH TEENAGED STRUMPETS WALLOW DAYLONG LIKE DINOS IN JACUZZIS

WE ALL MUST RISE AND WE ALL MUST FALL, AND THELONIOUS THE WISE SAVETH UNTO THEE IN THE WORDS OF ARETHA THE PROPHET: "OUR LORD SPACESHIP DRIVER, PRINCE ISH KABELIB DU MA CON CU LO DIT BABONG, LOOKS UPON A DIRTY MIND AS ONE LOOKS UPON DUNG STICK TO THE BOTTOM OF A STEEL-TOED BOOT, AND HE COMMANDS YOU ALL TO USE 100% PURE BIG POPPA E'S MAGIC POETRY!"