

The
BMEC
Writers Guild
presents



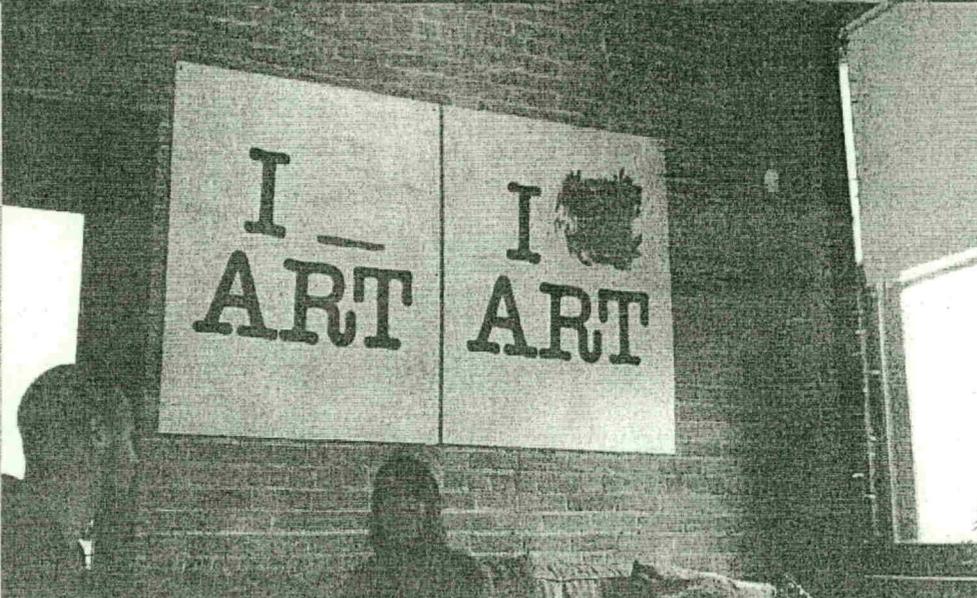
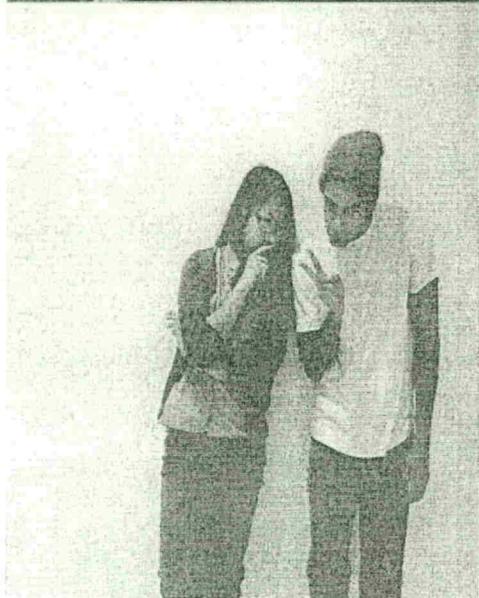
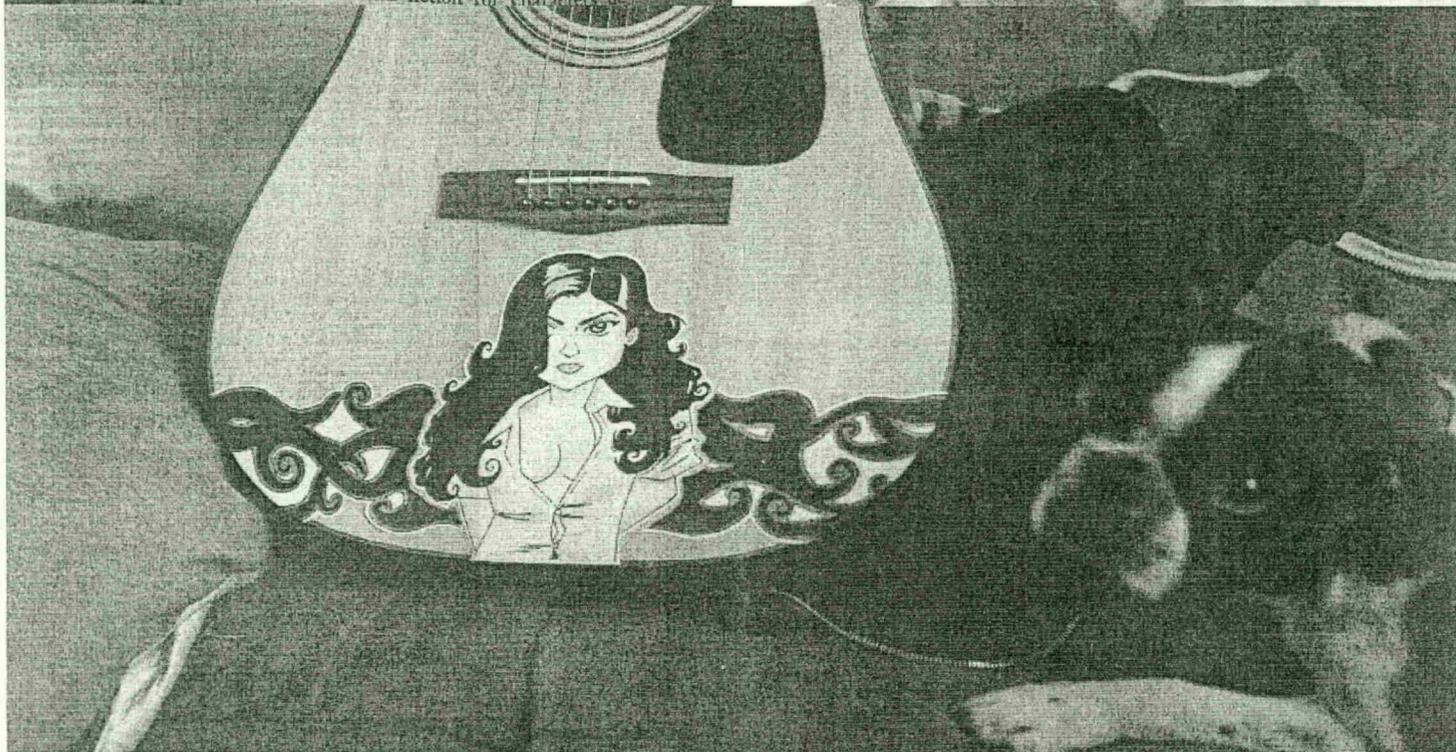
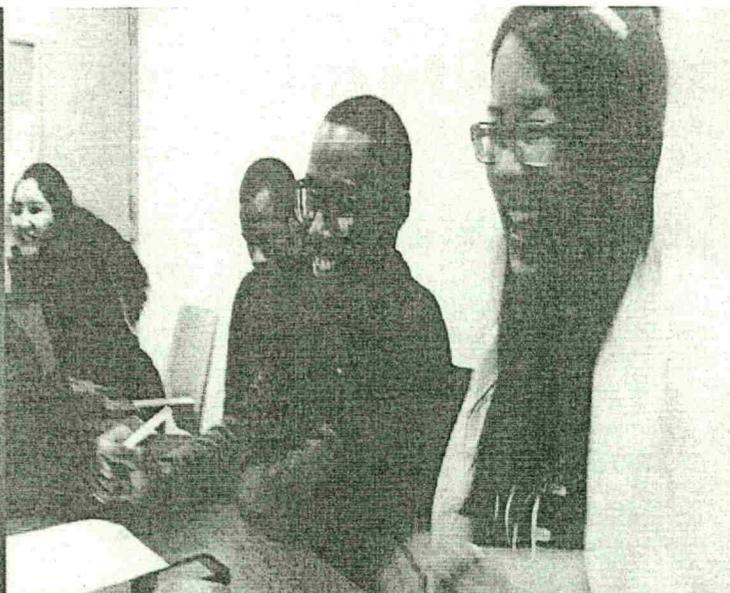
The
Guild



Fall 2014

... would not do more about this consideration...
Many of the lives where the will is huge, it forces itself
wards in many directions and thus comes more consistently
or wishfully into contact with Necessity than do the wills
of most men, so that little space is left in the middle ground
for the indifferent operation of chance and habit. Crane's
appears to be such a life. His work, as the chief outcome of the
life, has the same character, and he recognized this character
in the activity that produced it. He was replying to a younger
writer towards the end, when years of thought condensed:
"An artist, I think, is nothing but a powerful memory that
can move itself at will through certain experiences sideways
and every artist must be in some things powerless as a dead
snake." The sentence would repay a long analysis, but it will
have to suffice that the liberty of "move itself at will" is
gravely conditioned. Everything was related in this man,
will and living and work and fate, but the context was Necessity.

Why did the child born belatedly into a peaceful Newark
parsonage on November 1, 1871, spend his life imaging,
chasing, reporting, remembering War? And it will be long
before Crane's preference in his fiction for characters of



**THIS ZINE WAS PRINTED, PRODUCED, DRAWN OUT, SLAVED
OVER BY BMCC STUDENTS, MUCH LIKE YOURSELF.**

**THERE WAS NO FINANCIAL INCENTIVE,
BUT SIMPLY A NEED TO EXPRESS ONESELF CREATIVELY.**

**INFLUENCE AND INSPIRATION COMES IN ALL FORMS, BUT
NOTHING BEATS THE GUIDANCE OF SOMEONE WITH
EXPERIENCE.**

**WITHOUT PROFESSOR LARA STAPLETON, ADVISOR TO THE
WRITERS' GUILD CLUB, NONE OF THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE.**

**EXTRA THANKS GOES OUT TO PROFESSOR NITA NOVENO
AND PROFESSOR JULIE CASSIDY.**

BUT AN EXTRA THANKS GOES TO YOU, THE READER.

**WITH YOUR SUPPORT, BMCC CAN SLOWLY, BUT SURELY
TAKE OVER NEW YORK CITY.**

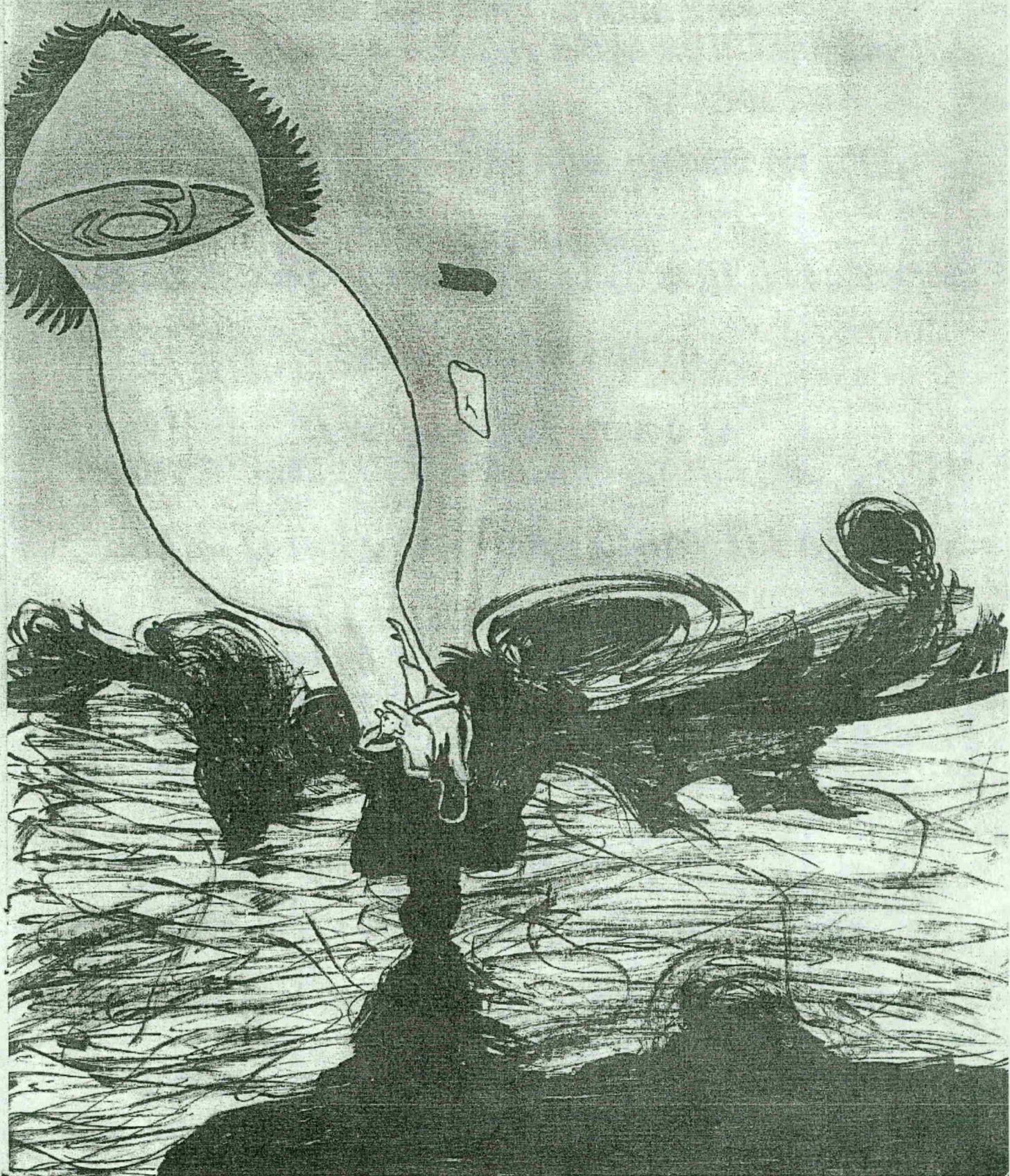
AND THEN, THE WORLD.

**LIKE SOME SORT OF ALIEN RACE HELLBENT ON ENSLAVING
THE HUMAN RACE.**

**OR HOARDS OF ZOMBIES NOM-NOMING ON YOUR
MOTHER'S BRAINS.**

**OR EVEN A GANG OF RABID SUBWAY RATS GNAWING OFF
YOUR YOUNGEST CHILD'S ARM.**

**WHAT THE HELL AM I TALKING ABOUT?!
DREAM ON...**



THE BMCC

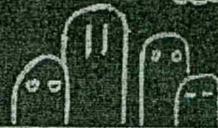


WRITERS'
GUILD

PRESENTS

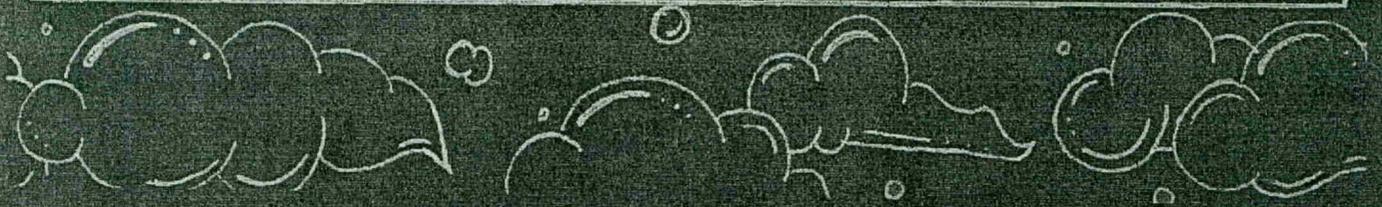


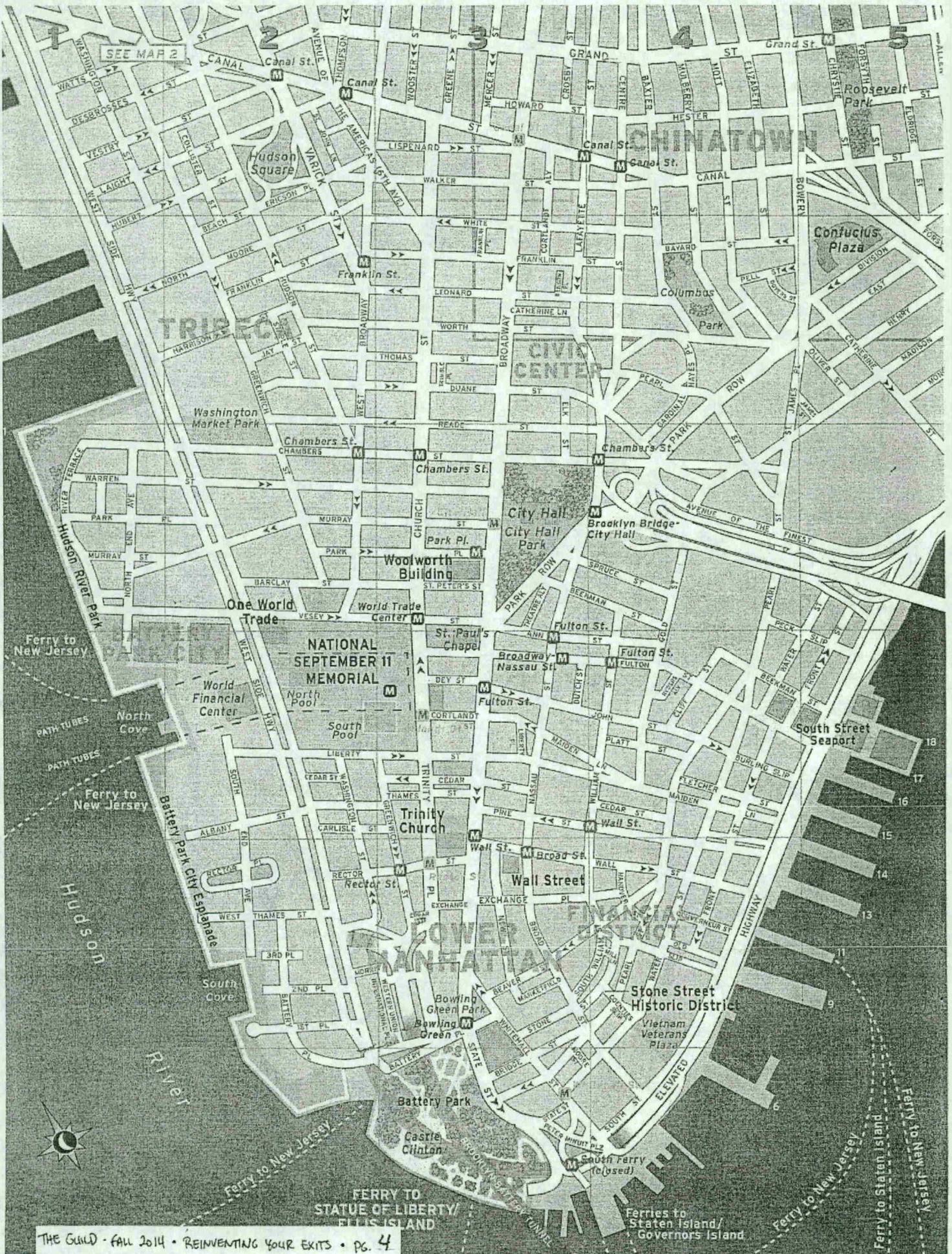
the fall
2014
edition of



THE

GUILD





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MEET the Guild



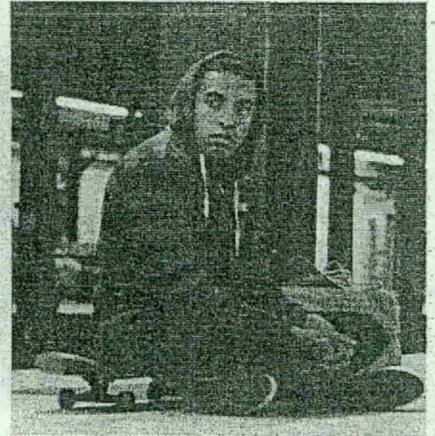
Roque Caston is a college freshman at BMCC, majoring in Writing and Lit. He created the humor blog "Roque's Reality" in 2009. He dreams of writing novels, short stories and journalism.

Natalie Diaz was born and raised in NYC. She loves reading, writing and trying new things. She plans to live in Japan, have a pet monkey and unicorn, and retire at an old age in Tahiti. Read some of her writing on Instagram: @ND.Writings



Jada Gordon is a freshman at BMCC majoring in Writing and Literature. She loves writing poetry, short stories and non-fiction. She also loves music, singing, writing, reading, record collecting, learning new things and thrift shopping.

Reyreyall day.com - illustrator, comic artist, musician, fiction writer, zine lover/maker, skateboarder, wanderer, marijuana aficionado, anti-capitalism and all around introverted insomniac.



Solomon Henderson is a Writing and Lit major, reoccurring 'Guild' resident and knower of all things relating to geek culture. His plans for the future are to become an internet journalist while maintaining a steady career as a fiction writer.

Kayla Lopez has lived in Chelsea, NY all her life. At a young age she taught herself how to draw and paint. She now works with clay, ink, figures, perspective, comics, animation and fantasy art. She loves to inspire and help those who struggle in their own art.



This is Rebecca Nghi - a book nerd with a great passion for fashion and writing. Her days are filled with blogging, volunteer work, and longboarding. Random fun fact - she has only been skating for a year and loves power sliding down hills.

Penelope Paulino is a BMCC Liberal Arts major. She plans to change her major to English when she begins working on her Bachelors. In her spare time she enjoys writing, drinking, listening to goth/metal.



Rose is her name, prose is her game. When this former art student isn't honing her literary craft, she can be found playing rookie pastry chef in the kitchen, armed with her favorite pink apron. She also loves cats, retro games and Harry Potter.

Salutations! I'm a freshman at BMCC, and my hobbies include: reading, writing, twerking and working. For all you smexy boys out there, I'm single and ready to mingle! Peace out! - Woodensky Thomas



Hello! I am a person, I promise you! I'm originally from Princeton but I transferred to BMCC. Don't judge me, you don't know my life. Follow me on twitter: #dabaddest

ABOUT US



IF you haven't joined a club yet here at Bmcc, I highly recommend it. But if you really want to fit in with the coolest of the cool Kids, then you should join Bmcc's Writers' Guild. Our club attracts a diverse group of Kids from various creative mediums -

writers, musicians, poets, activists, gamers, lovers, liars, fashionistas ... you name it. Where ever your creative passion takes you, you will surely find some-one of a similar interest. It can be extremely intimidating finding where you belong in a college

that averages more than 24,000 students per year. But this is where clubs come in to save the day.

I had the fortune of being president of the Writers' Guild for the Fall 2014 semester, and it's an experience I wouldn't trade for the world. While it had its headaches, nothing competes with the school-funded trips, inspirational guest speakers and everlasting friendships I've gained.

We even put on an open mic event each semester called 'Voices' where all students are welcomed to showcase their creativity.

While I'm sure all of Bmcc's clubs are cool, none of them will make you cool and the envy of all your peers quite like the Writers' Guild.

-RRAD!

-Email us!-

Writersguildbmcc@gmail.com



THE BMCC WRITER'S GUILD
PRESENTS ...

DREAM ON!



If only, if only ...



... I could go anywhere,
ANYWHERE BUT HERE!

I would fly
high above the city,
far far away ...



To a far away land

full of creatures,
like me, looking for
a new friend.

I would
travel on, lost at sea,
battling ancient
sea monsters!

I would be
young, broke and free,
eating pancakes everyday
just like a lumberjack!!!

Do you have a story to tell? or a love for the written word? Well, become a cool kid and join the Bmcc Writers' Guild!!!

illustration: RAAD!
reyreyallday.com

There are so many cool reasons to become a member - Guest speakers, Writing Workshops, field trips, cookie parties, and pancakes (maybe)!

For more info, check out: [facebook.com/writersguildbmcc](https://www.facebook.com/writersguildbmcc) or contact us at: Writersguildbmcc@gmail.com

POETRY

Caged Little Bird

BY ROMANO DENOON

They told us that we're free,
And free that we should be.
Yet! We're bonded by chains
That we fight!
We fight! So desperately.
Under one blue sky,
We breathe the same air!
And yet, our trees isn't green.
Is this justice!
Is this fair!

They say we have choices.
And it can be grasp in our hands.
But! what choice can we have,
If our hands-
Are not the same?

They told us that we are free,
And free that we would be.
And yet,
Freedom!
Is something that we still cannot see?

Untitled

BY NATALIE DIAZ

I think Life brings forth a message. Let that
message be a guide:

to stray souls traveling aimlessly,
to healing hearts,
to those who are suffering.

Leave your message through your life.

Let it be positive. Be bold, fight the fight, fight
the fright. Don't go through life walking in a
tunnel of fear, regrets, hopelessness, drowning
in things you cannot change because change is
inevitable. Don't look at life as a mission. And if
you do let it be a mission you complete head on.

Let it be a mission. You learned from and
conquered, despite the obstacles. Be the
challenge, don't let life challenge you.

Minneapolis Midnight

BY MATT GAHLER

but by the water, it's peaceful. even the sound of the waves and the throw of the undertow and its ability to overpower you as you struggle to stay afloat can relax you because it makes you completely aware of your insignificance as a human. it's the humbling power of nature.

you sit in the back seat of the car as it speeds down the lakeside road while the scent of dead fish sporadically sneaks in through the open windows as the cool air feels amazing against your warm skin. you're considering grabbing the hand of the person on your right, but then decid against it because the pale green towel on your lap will barely hide the erection that simple human contact will give you. instead, you stare out at the seaside condos and imagine the people inside. the downtown crowd. the men in their business suits, with briefcases and tacky crew cuts, walking to the overpriced parking garage to their new SUVs or expensive sports cars, and you silently thank god that you don't strive for the same conventional success. you'd prefer to drive to the water in the middle of the night with a piss warm beer in your messenger bag to sit on the soft sand and watch the moonlight reflect off the lake as airplanes pass overhead with their blinking lights.

the car turns off the main road into the back parking lot that will hide the car from those people who don't think you should be at the beach at this hour. you suddenly realize that you're almost happy. definitely content. and you realize that there is nowhere else in the world you'd rather be and you begin to wonder if those people (the downtown crowd) ever have these moments and if so then you know you're not as profound as you pride yourself of being. so you don't think about that and instead think about this moment and the events leading up to this - the happy hour two-for-ones and greasy french fries and camel lights.

you walk towards the water stumbling a bit in your inebriated state but you're unwilling to turn back or stop until you're by the water. you push through the shrubs and bushes

and jump off the low concrete ledge that separates the road from the beach. you start to sink a bit as you walk. small bits of sand filling your shoes with each step. "is this good?", someone asks, stopping by an empty lifeguard chair. you nod and drop your belongings on the ground and collapse onto the towel. you grab the warm beer from your bag and open it, immediately sipping at the foam that erupts from the pressurized aluminum. you take a sip and pass it on. it becomes communal beer because the liquor stores are closed and everyone wants to remain as fucked up as you.

you ditch the empty can and follow your friends to the shoreline wading into the icy water up to your knees before you stop. you begin to wonder what it would be like to lie down and let the water take you not because you're suicidal but because you're curious of what may be next. the same curiosity that forces you out of bed in the morning to work towards your useless degree that will only serve to make you pretentious and able to hold semi-interesting dinner-party conversation. you look down into the dark water beneath you and you shiver from the cold and the fear of open water and the idea that something sinister could be lurking around your legs waiting to swallow you whole. but you refuse to falter to your fears. instead you slowly step forward and close your eyes and listen to the sound of waves against the shore. because by the water it's peaceful.



Mars

BY NORRIS GIRDY

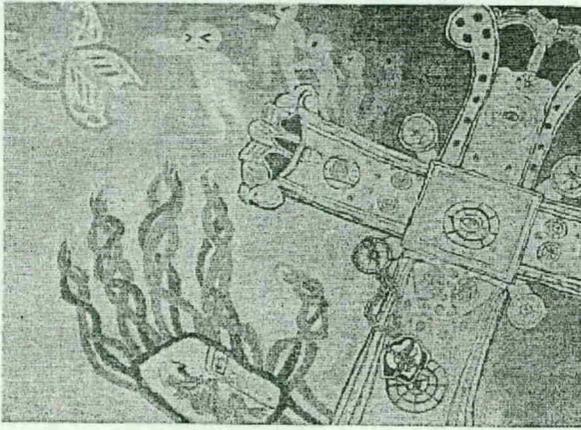
Red sand, blue sky
Two rocks, two gods
Sleeping titan, deep wounds
Devil temper, heavenly crowns
New world, old world
Own lore, own ancients
Own kingdoms, own royalty
Own religions, own wars
Own renaissance, own genocides
Lost forts, lost palaces
Lost jungles, lost oceans
Lost people, lost future
Forgotten shroud



Driven

BY JADA GORDEN

Driving for what?
In the dark.
Driving for a solution
for an answer
Driving to nowhere to fill the nothingness of
loneliness
If I could drive to the ends of the earth I
would.
Driving till there's no more road
Driving just stay in my mode
No people.
No distractions.
Like I'm in space
The only thing I see is the open road
That awaits me.
Everything and everyone that hates me is
behind me.
God is the only one who could find me.
Death is the only thing that could stop me.
I'm driving till there's no more road
Driving just to stay in my mode
No people.
No distractions.
Like I'm in space.
I'm driven to find my destination
Driven to know the answers
Although there's nothing there
I still keep searching
Till I tear.



Magical?

BY JADA GORDEN

Although we don't all believe in magic,
There are some times i believe moments are magical
Like the time our souls danced against the light
I had my arms wrapped around him
To feel the closeness of being close to someone for the first time.
Letting my maze runner guard around my heart come down
And it be okay.
Just to squeeze and ingest his intoxicating smell. I ingested his scent like a cat
marking its territory.
It was nothing sexual
Just intimate
Just beautiful
I was addicted to holding him, observing, and taking the scenery that was him.
Even looking at the intricate scars and flaws on him.
Like a beautiful mistake (at the risk of sounding corny)
These things mean nothing to people in my generation probably.
But it means the world to me.
We swayed to the sound of the music pouring out of the speakers.
The music might as well have been off.
Cause we danced to our personal song. Our bodies swayed to a different tune.
A tune we knew
A tune we only knew the words and melody to.
Is this magic?
Sure, I'm in a trance but am I really under a hypnotic spell? Or hypnotic thrill?
To know that I've gained and I lost but that means nothing when I'm being held
down by the weight of this human being is relieving as all hell.
I don't wanna pour my whole heart into this and hurt.
So our souls danced against that dim light and the song ended we stayed.
Just cool
Just calm
Could this be magical?

Caustic Breath

BY MARK MACNEIL

One foot in the gutter,
one foot in the grave,
emotionally bankrupt and morally depraved
lurking on the outside,
seeping through the cracks
dissipated as the smog pouring from the smokestacks

Drank my last drop, stumbled down the street
brimming with resentment, laughing maniacally,
throwing bags of garbage at the traffic in the road,
wishing that i had a fucking cannon to unload

I'll wake up tomorrow smelling like a rose
sprawled out in your doorway, darling, with vomit on my
clothes
Pull myself together, climbing to my feet
Jackhammer in my head digging thru the meat

Oh no,
it cant be;
drinking will be the death of me
Wet pants,
wet brain;
see my life going down the drain

Revolving Door

BY MARK MACNEIL

No longer sure what you're living for
No address, no bed and no front door
Stumbling from one day to the next

Years go by, each one faster,
tramp along the shores of disaster,
recall the days when you played with a full deck
and maintained some semblance of self respect

Last night you won a battle but you're losing a war,
with your ass up in the air and your face down in the floor
A thrill seeking binge drinker who just won't quit,
till you've passed out on the toilet while taking a shit

Booze thirsting depravity has taken you this far
and you don't pay for your drinks
and you're banned from half the bars
Bartender pour me out a whiskey double shot,
"That'll be seven dollars." You gulp it down and don't pay squat
Now you're flying out the door
and you're slipping in the snow,
but this city's got a half a million watering holes to go,
and this city's got three million broken living in despair,
and this city's got three million broken multi millionaires,
and I know
it's a long, long way to go
when the rope gets taut and you've still got
a long way left to go,
exist alone among a multitude of wretched souls,
and you know the only dent you'll put in this world will be your burial plot.

Colorless

BY CARLOS MARTINEZ

Like a gun firing for peace,
It is misunderstood.
The blue man takes that same gun,
Sending a mellow yellow man deep in red, red, red.

What can be worse than an animal?
A human with human choices.
Don't let them harvest my thoughts or yours.
They'll turn our colorful eyes gray.

Such dead eyes that once saw infinite wide canvases above one's
head.
Such hollowness where a candle used to light our bodies.
I can't see! I can't feel you!
Who are you? What are you? What is that you call a pulse?

As long as someone tells me the sky is blue,
I can rest a little easy. Just for a while.
Across a bridge with no end,
It tells me there's something on the other side.

It puts a shine on my face,
From a moon that mimics the sun.
Only to illuminate the strange.
I'm not strange but no one is normal here.

Slipping away from a grip,
When no one has ever touched each other in years,
I'll see to myself the answer.
And it will be in one sentence.

Yellow

You like your coffee
with too much cream
and too much sugar
that it no longer tastes like coffee.

Night or day
you craved the taste
like a compulsion
or a necessity.

Each time I would watch
your anticipating lips
curve into a smile
as I handed you the yellow mug
that you would always use
whenever you'd come over.

I would watch
Your fingers curl
around the handle
before you took your first sip;
"It needs more sugar," you'd always say.

No matter how many times
I wash the mug
It will always be yours.

It is your yellow mug
dotted with simple patterns in brown
ceramic ink;
it is the mug which your lips have
touched as often they have mine.

**BOTH PIECES BY
ROSE TENORIO**

Plaything

I am not your plaything
that you can claim to love one minute
and easily shelf the next.

I am not a doll
you can carelessly lug and tug,
dress and undress,
if my clothes are not to your liking.

I am not a plastic toy
with colorful buttons
that you can press
to amuse yourself
whenever you have grown bored.

i am not battery operated,
but you treat me like so.
but despite it all,
i willingly give you
all that you ask
until my energy runs dry;
until I've forgotten that I'm human.
and finite.
and not your plaything.

NOVEL
FIGHTON

Love Is Action

BY KEVIN BURNS

Earlier this year, one of my oldest and dearest childhood friends purchased a beautifully preserved 4-story brownstone that was built in 1901 in my neighborhood of Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. The house still retains much of the detailed woodwork and moldings that make a pristine Brooklyn brownstone a cherished and well sought after commodity.

The sense of family and community is palatable as you stroll down block after block flanked by leafy one hundred year old oak trees that create an emerald canopy allowing shafts of golden sunlight to illuminate the streets below. The ever-expanding cultural diversification of the neighborhood helps to create a small town atmosphere in the heart of bustling Brooklyn. It is a common sight on warm sunny day to see three generations sitting on the steps of their home engaging in banter and laughter familiar to families all across America. As I walk down my street neighbors greet me with heartfelt hellos as I make way my to the A train into Manhattan.

The influx of new restaurants, galleries and shops give the neighborhood a sense of vitality and renewal without sacrificing the close knit communal bonds that have been woven into the fabric of area over the decades.

My friend, the new homeowner, has recently begun to observe that many motorists have begun to pass through our relatively tranquil community with their audio systems turned up to volumes that are loud enough to make his windows in his home vibrate from two blocks away. Also, a more recent trend in sound pollution are motorcycle clubs that parade through the streets during the summer months with their engines churning and blaring as if it was opening day at a Nascar event. My dear friend becomes incense at the lack of regard and respect these noise nuisances have for the others in the community who might not be quite ready at 8:30am on a Sunday morning to hear Beyonce singing her latest ode to female empowerment in hi-decibel, super bass clarity from blocks away.

There is little that can be debated when it comes the obvious rudeness when a person allows their personal pastime pleasures to encroach onto the lives of others who might not share their affinity for screeching tires or early morning stadium quality surround sound.

After thoughtful reflection, I realized that these breeches of social decorum stem from the lack of Love in our society. It might be considered, by some, a dramatic leap to call a person who decides to play his or hers music unreasonably loud deficient in Love but their self serving behavior demonstrates their lack of Love and compassion for others.

Love is an action and not a word.

I am certain that if these same individuals were new parents suffering through sleepless nights with a newborn baby they would be a bit more aware of volume.

Though the Internet has been a wonderful bridge that links people and ideas from across the globe it has also silently and without much notice taken away the tactile and emotional experience that can only be derived through face to face human interactions. Sitting for endless hours in front of a computer screen a false sense of a community is created and Ego becomes the motivating factor in most online interactions.

The Internet encourages the idea of I, me and my.

Love fosters a culture of us and we.

Love is the fulcrum that enables all the other virtues to exist. Love motivates me to assist a woman struggling to carry her heavy luggage up a subway stairs or give my entrepreneurial advice and service to young couples opening their first business.

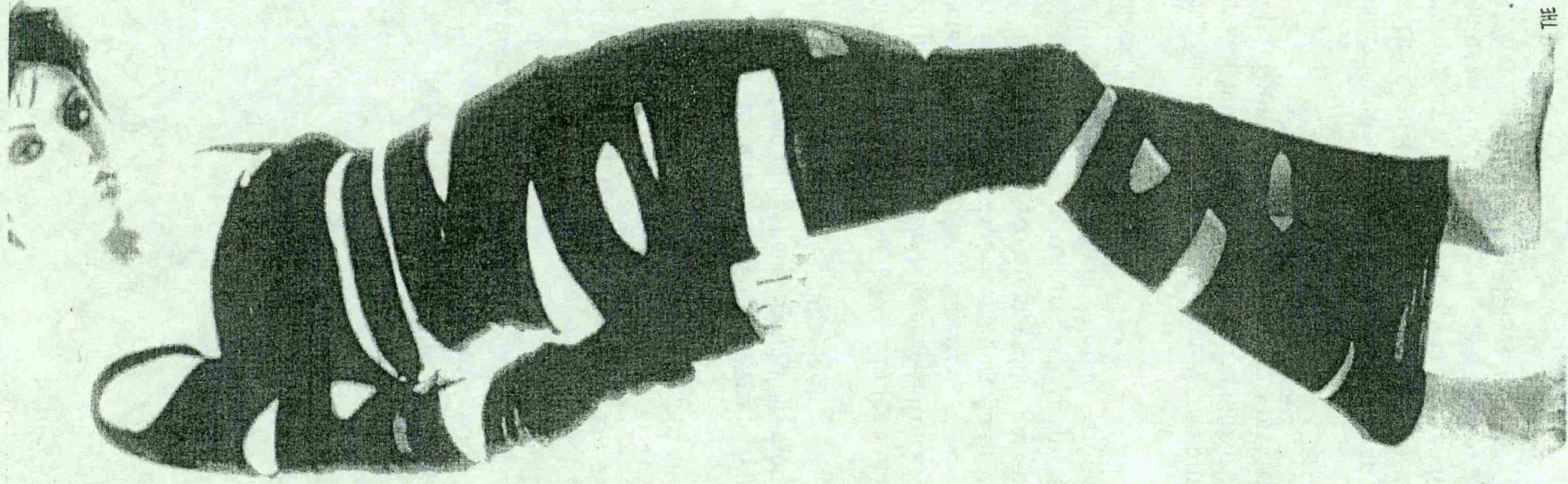
Love wants to lend a hand when a hand is needed. Love does not constantly have its hand out wanting to take more than is required.

Love is inclusive and not exclusive. Love encourages laughter and banishes tears.

The easiest way for me to manifest Love in my daily life is to think about the respect and thoughtful consideration I want to have bestowed upon me and then begin to engage with everyone I encounter as if they were a reflection of me.

Once we see our hopes, dreams and aspirations reflected in the people who surround us when we can then begin to demonstrate Love in all aspects of our lives. Love shines an embracing light on how we are all connected and removes the shadows caused by prejudice and fear.

Love is action and not word.



Confessions of an Optimist

BY ROQUE CASTON

My name is Roque Caston and I'm an optimist. The reason that I'm an optimist is because I always look on the bright side of life, no matter how serious it is. I process every single dark tale, and somehow find a way to come out from the other side stronger than ever, but with my sense of humor still intact.

What is going on in my subconscious that it is making me have these optimism thoughts? I probably will never have a highly detailed review on my own self-evaluation when it comes to optimism. However, I'm not complaining. Matter of fact, I'm quite enjoying this train of thought. It has helped me out during many dark times in my life.

I'm not going to preach, but I am grateful for it. According to a psychologist, I'm high on neuroticism. That means that I'm extremely sensitivity and bound to look on nearly everything in life as a threat towards my health & well-being.

I think it all started back from when I was little kid. I was bullied in school for being "different." I used to get all of the Steve Urkel from Family Matters and Carlton Banks from The Fresh Prince of Bel Air references growing up. A nerd or a geek wasn't considered acceptable to society at the time. Being smart was considered a threat amongst your fellow students during early years. According to them, you're not supposed to be different, or else, you would be excluded from society, and ostracized to the best of their abilities for young kids. You either fit the norm or society will develop a reason why you shouldn't exist until you eventually change into the norm.

There are moments when I did feel like an outsider. I felt like no one understood my love for literature, role-playing video games, my love of classical music from Frank Sinatra to Dean Martin and Barbra Streisand, or thorough observations on life since I'm a listener more than a talker.

I don't remember when this happened, but there came a point in my life when I stopped crying or getting angry about things in life. As much as I tried to be too serious or a person who cries about nearly everything, as soon as someone presented me with a good joke, I would find myself laughing so hard, all of that seriousness goes out the window, and I would have this grin on my face that would last for hours. I've developed a mentality in

which I can't dwell on sadness for too long, and eventually move on from it with my happiness intact.

Granted, I am often times a serious person. I get a reminder after reading philosophical quotes from the character Lord Henry in the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but I don't let it take over my life entirely. Based on previous experiences, if you try to be a one-hundred percent serious person, you might in turn look like the most depressed person in human history, watching another depressing episode of *The Young & The Restless*, despite the fact you're only eighteen or twenty-five years old.

That's why I self-identify as an optimist. I never make it an unintentional effort, but I often express to people during casual conversations without actually saying the word. I want to show people that even though terrible things are going on, you should keep a smile on your face because this will eventually become a funny story. Power through those difficult times, shed your tears, and have a good night's sleep, so that in the end, you can laugh about it over three cups of beer at the bar with friends you love dearly.

One of my role models, Nora Ephron, an iconic writer, essayist, journalist, and Oscar nominated screenwriter, followed this way of living until the day she died back in 2012. Her parents taught her that even though life is hard at first, you will eventually be able to turn your life around and make this tiny situation a funny story. Someday, this difficult part of life will eventually become an awesome influence, and awesome material no matter what career you've chosen.

When it comes to life it might be difficult to process at first, but you'll eventually realize that the sky hasn't fallen. You might be swallowed up, but you are in the throat, not the digestive traits. There is still time to climb up and laugh about how funny it was to climb past the nasty saliva in the end.

That's how I look at life. I am a human being just like everyone else. I have feelings and I do feel down about things in life that are beyond my control on rare occasions. However, I wake up the next day and realize that I can't dwell on it for too long. Nothing in life is worth days of emotional dwelling and overpriced vanilla ice-cream.

Why not turn this into a funny story, so that the next time you're sharing stories over the campfire with friends, you have personal and funny material waiting to present amongst your peers?

I, personally, would rather have Popeye's, KFC, and a booty call on speed dial before I ever let life linger me again into depression and sadness. I've been down that road before and I can say that I'm glad I took a detour before my car decided to land in quick sand down there.

This is my internal confession of being an optimist. I prefer to accept everything that comes in life, accept the good and the bad, power through the emotions, choose not to dwell on it, turn it into a funny story to tell later on, and live my life happily until the day I am in the grave.

That should be on my future tombstone:

"A life should always begin and end with a smile on your face."

Live While You're Young **BY ROQUE CASTON**

Can you believe that it took a British pop boy band to emerge in the 2000s, and become one of the reasons to remind teenagers and people in their 20's and 30's to start living their young ages while they still can? Can you blame them? Based on the way life is secretly forcing the current young generation to live their lives older than their actual age, it's easy to forget about the young person that is still inside.

In this current society, young ones are facing the pressure of being forced to get older by the generation that came before them. Their youth is being stripped from them, and they're forced to live an older life before they are even given the chance to actually be young. It's as if life and the people revolving around it are convincing them to take a large step, skip a couple of decades, and start living an elder's person's life, metaphorically speaking, during a time when the average twenty or thirty something are supposed to find themselves, decide on what they want in life, and have fun in the meantime.

Can you blame them? There is immense pressure put upon twenty-first century youth particularly.

Some might be the first in their family to attend some of America's top colleges like Harvard, Yale, Ivy Leagues, NYU, Columbia, and Stanford. Some are career wise on their way to becoming the first big success story, or possibly continuing the family legacy of success stories by placing their mark on the current generation.

Once graduation has ended, and the careers have commenced, there are high expectations

to not only have a successful career, but to also maintain financial stability, look and act a certain way amongst people old and young, create a roof over their heads, and never have any problems going forward. That way, when it's time to settle down and have children, the offspring will be influenced and inspired by the way the young generation before them has turned "nothing into something." It's the physical proof that the elders didn't march for freedom for nothing.

But here's a question that the elder generation should ask themselves? Can the young ones do that while living their young lives at the same time? Human beings can only be young once. Why should the opportunity be stripped away from them so soon?

Not to mention, and no offence, but the elders can be a tad hypocritical. One minute, they're giving a lecture in the kitchen on requesting why a young person should mature and become mentally older faster than the speed of light. Then the minute a young person presents themselves as old and wise, they are attack by some form of ageism and asked "Why are you trying to be us? Why aren't you acting like your real age?"

That last question does prove a point. Why are young people trying to act like older people? Shouldn't they enjoy being young while they still can. Shouldn't there be a lot of fist bumping, and rump shaking at nightclubs while the body is still physically capable of doing it? Humans can't twirl a hula-hoop around forever. Do it while the thighs are still young and fresh.

This is their time to shine and place a mark on the 21st century. For example, the older generation still hasn't grasp onto the world of technology. The bright minds of our youth have found the capability of using this permanent digital landmark, and have generated billions, or even trillions of dollars to prove that point. Wall Street, for example, should be cutting them a check.

Let them go to the best clubs & restaurants, find friendships, understand the true meaning of love. For God's sake, they survived an economy that nearly put America into another version of "The Great Depression" many years ago, and made student loans the worst enemy of every college student's lives.

Here's the entire overview about being young for people who can't understand the healthy cycle of youth.

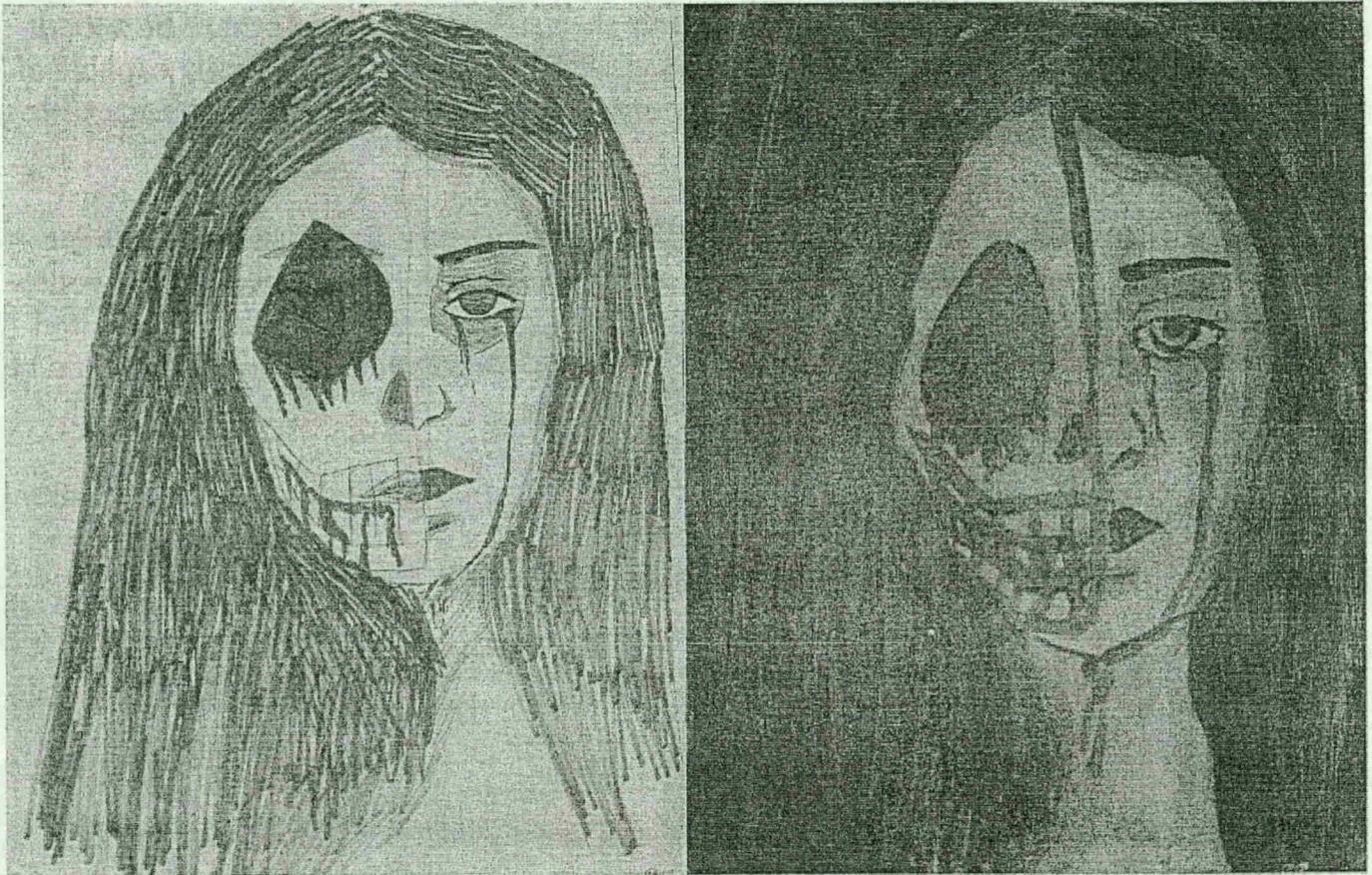
Young men and women want to rock out loud and live a wild, youthful life, so that they won't have to think about it anymore when they're in their forties and fifties. When it comes to being middle aged, it's all about being in your apartment while hanging with friends over dinner, red wine, and beer. Then as they're having dinner, they're reminiscing about our 20's and 30's, bragging about how wild things were back in the day. Yet, grateful for the fact that all of that wildness has left the body and all people want to do now is sit

back and enjoy the rest of their lives.

In conclusion, don't force the young generation to grow old. Let them live their lives while they still can. The last thing anyone wants to see is a sixty-five year old male or female at a nightclub in tight, contemporary clothing twerking, trying to act like a person in their twenties because they didn't get the chance to do it decades ago. Sorry to say this, but that chance is gone.

So stop embarrassing yourself to sit the hell down!

For people who are still young, take this opportunity to your advantage. Create a mark on the generation that was chosen for the current young person. The forties and fifties can wait. It's the current decade they need to focus on.



Look Up

BY PHOEBE MINARDI

I'm a New Yorker who likes to look up. I make a special point to raise my eyes up to the majestic glass and steel buildings towering around me as I walk among their permanently planted feet. They feel like sleeping giants; great living beasts filled with people. So. Many. People. But up there in all the glass and the steel, we're segmented, safe to do whatever it is that we do. Sooner or later we have to get somewhere; we spill out onto the streets in droves and that's where all the life is. Everyone of every kind that there could possibly be is in this city and they all have to get somewhere. So you venture out to do all of those things, and along the way you meet or at least see everyone of every kind. Every one of them an individual. I think it's beautiful.

I grew up in the woods. I live in Brooklyn now, but I'm from Alabama. I've lived here for 13 years and it's my home. So I'm not a native, but some would say I get honorary status. Growing up in the deep south, my life was very different from what it is today. The woods were all around and I was a bit of a "tomboy" for most of my formative years. My friends and I were pretty free to roam, and the wild patches of land were everywhere; places you could go where there was no one else around for what felt like miles. We would ride our bikes to all of our "secret headquarters" sites, like the red clay pits, the "ginger" of dirt. It's the most vibrant color orange and it's really compact, perfect for doing dangerous bike tricks you probably shouldn't be doing. Of course you always got busted (red clay turns everything orange). Our favorite, though, was the train wreck site. It was the discovery of the summer! There had been a train wreck something like 15 years prior; one year, we found it. It was so cool. There was this one huge rusty cylinder which I guessed had to have been a giant pipe. It was big enough to walk through while standing up straight, or sit and hangout in. Or make your "Super Secret Base of Operations," all of which we did. There were also all of these small stone ball bearings scattered around; they seemed to be made of chalk and would explode in a very satisfying way if you threw them. They were the perfect defense for our secret base.

That was in Ozark, Alabama, where the town motto was: A Great Place to Retire. It was the very picture of sleepy little town. I lived close (like 10 feet) to my grandparents and they're very "Long Island Italian." Growing up, whenever an aunt, uncle, cousin or some other various relative would come visit, they would all get very drunk and my grandpa would tell these (much) larger than life stories about New York. He would say "Back when we lived on The Island." and "...then we had to go drag Wayne's sorry ass all the way back

from The City! Again!!" Of course everyone would laugh hysterically and I remember thinking "I want to go there! That's where all the fun is!!" Small wonder I live here today. We lived in Ozark for 10 years, and it always had this charming "Small Town USA" feel about it. I really loved it there.

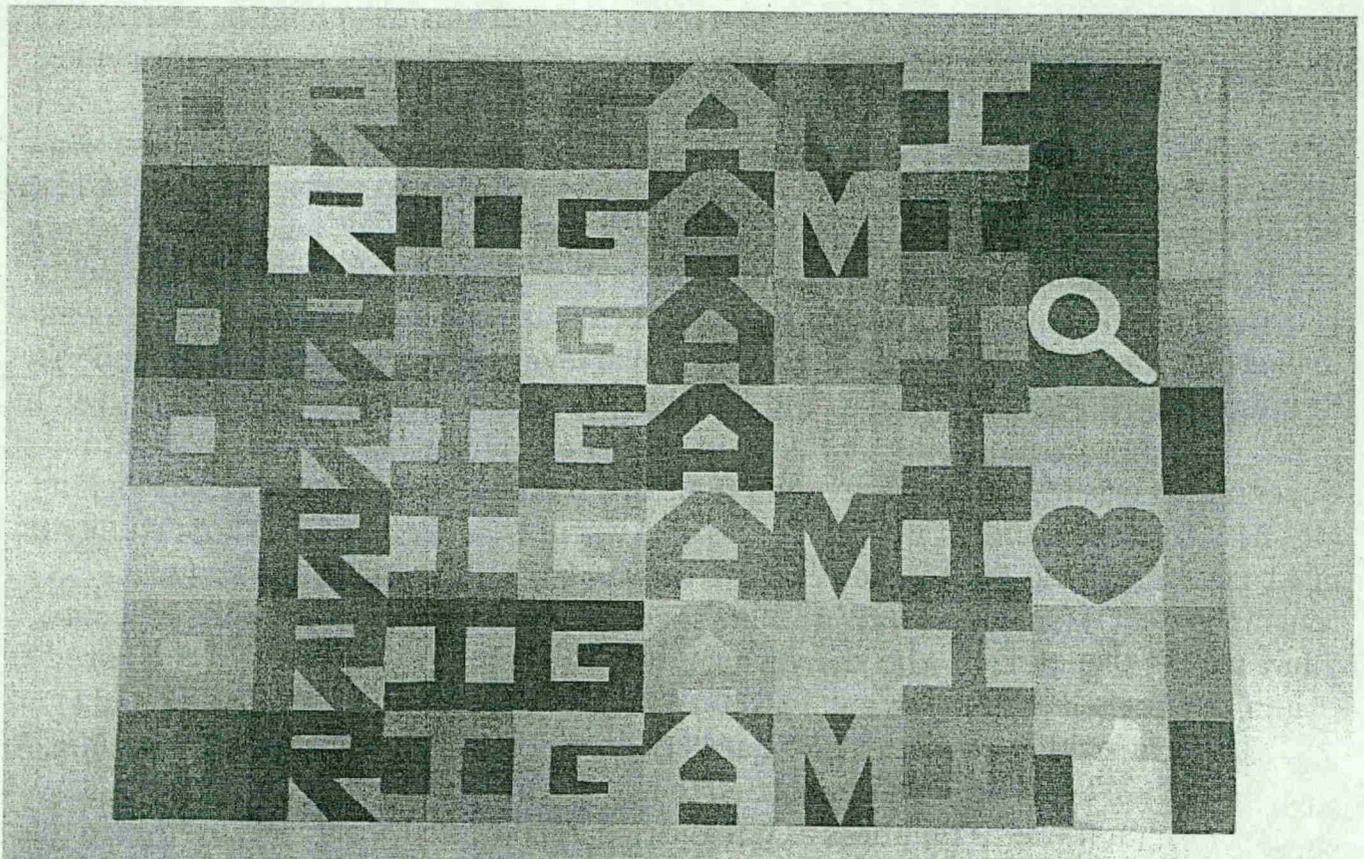
When I was 14, we moved to Grand Bay, Alabama. Grand Bay was not as charming nor was it actually a proper town.. It didn't constitute a township because not enough people lived there. We had moved our trailer (yes I know it's cliché but it's true) from my grandparents' property in Ozark to a piece of "virgin" land in Grand Bay. That means that no one had ever built a house on it and we had to have all of the plumbing and electrical put into the ground before we could put the trailer there. The name of that street was Homestead Ave, which is funny because I always felt like a homesteader; a pioneer settling the wild forests in the remotest parts of Alabama. We built a back and a front deck. My mom had a long driveway built which was made out of crushed oyster shells. I hated that driveway; it stank like fish in the summer and we went through so many tires! We settled the trailer pretty far back from that dirt road called Homestead, which was made of that same red clay I used to bike on as a kid. When we opened our back door (it was actually on the side of the trailer but we always called it the back door), the woods were right there. I mean right there. It felt ominous and lonely having your home be that isolated by a such a deep curtain of trees. Not to say I didn't still enjoy roaming around in the woods, I did and still do, but these woods were eerie in their sheer size and density; they went right up to my back porch. They seemed poised at any moment to rise up and swallow my comparatively small home.

I had to travel to the next town to get to school because we didn't have a high school in our town. We also didn't have a fire department or a police department. Grand Bay was basically just a truck stop. We had a Stuckey's, Waffle House (which I worked at), two gas stations (one of which I worked at for a short time), a grocery store, video rental store, fried chicken stand, and a bar called the Blue Bayou (where my mom met her 5th husband). That was pretty much it; it was a literal "one stop light town." Now I live in the land of a million stoplights and millions of people.

It was at that time in my life that I began to dream of this city. I had always been fascinated with it, but that was when I became obsessed. I didn't fit in there and I didn't really try to. Alabama feels like a choke chain to someone with a creative spirit, I would pull on my restraints as far as I could go but someone would always try to reign me in. I wrote my first long story at the age of 15 (and while I'm sure now that it was not the masterpiece I thought it was at the time) it was stolen by some older kids and burned in front of me. They said they wanted to teach me a lesson; that I was not welcome and neither were my strange ideas. I knew I had to leave and that there would be a place for people" like me." New York was that place. For almost a year I saved every penny that I could spare; I moved here when I was 20, by myself, with \$300 to my name. I knew right away that I was home and as I said, that was 13 years ago.

Sometimes when I walk these streets, I become overwhelmed by the sheer complexity of it; how we all (more or less) agree on how to deal with each other considering the staggering number of people around us. I look up at these giants we have built so that we can hold even more people. Growing up, it was strange to see a building that was more than two stories. Now I walk among the tallest buildings in the world and I take the time to marvel. I walk the sidewalks like pro. I weave around the slow walkers, the crazies, and the people trying to sell me something, with grace and speed. Sometimes I like to go to the park and wander around the woods, but I can still hear the buzz of humanity when surrounded by those trees. I can still see a few tall buildings looming up out of the canopy in the background. I find these things oddly comforting. No matter where I am, someone will always be nearby. I never have to be that isolated again.

I've never gone back to Alabama, not even to visit. I've traded my woods for buildings; my trailer for an apartment (that I love). I've surrounded myself with people I care about and can see at pretty much any time I'd like. I don't get homesick, because I am home. The home of my childhood is gone now, but I don't mourn it. I made a new one here among the concrete, steel and the millions of other misfits who have packed themselves into this city because they know that it's the one place where all of us belong. So when I walk past all these people on the crowded streets, or I look up to see them scurrying around inside those massive structures; it makes me proud. It makes me appreciate of how far I've come, and how far I have left to go.



My Autobiography

BY WOODENSKY THOMAS

Marilyn Monroe once said; "Wanting to be someone else is a waste of the person you are". For years now, I've contemplated what that quote truly meant, and the significant role it played in my life. When I think back to a time in which I couldn't even trust myself, let alone love myself, I can't help but laugh hysterically. Considering my current life, and my future goals, one thing's for certain; I'm proud of who I am today, and look forward to what I'm going to become tomorrow. The events of my past helped shape me into the man you see before you today. I was born on a frigid, rainy day in December of 1996. Born and raised in Brooklyn, My family was made up of my mother, my father, and my two brothers; with me being the middle child. My parents immigrated to the United States 3 years prior to the birth of my older brother, in search of a better life, and the pursuit of the 'American Dream'; but to my discontent, they held on to their cultural, and religious beliefs, leaving nothing but their empty homes behind them in Haiti. At the age of 5, my mother enrolled my brother and I in a trilingual school for English, French, and Haitian-Creole. Since then, I developed a weird, and skeptical repulsion for languages outside of English. I felt as though it was my native tongue, so I thought it was my civic duty to improve my syntax. This made me a social outcast from all the other kids at school, and talking from experience, kids can be very mean. I was shunned, bullied, and tormented; so I did what any kid who's desperate for friends would try to do - I tried looking for attention in all the wrong ways. Misbehavior, insolence, and vulgarity are all but a few. I didn't have anyone as a friend, and didn't care enough to go with the normal approach of gaining amiability. In spite of this, I knew for a fact that this wasn't truly me and this isn't the person I wanted to be. I just wanted to be myself, and for people to love me for who I am, but I found that to be infuriating. It was like trying to find fur on a rattlesnake. I just wanted to start over, but in life, you don't get mulligans, as you do in golf. At age 11, my family and I moved to Queens. This was my chance for redemption. This was the fresh new start I was looking for - new faces, new places, different races, and warm embraces. Another opportunity to make friends, but I knew it wasn't going to be easy because, growing up I had to constantly deal with living in my brothers shadow. It was cold, desolate, and lonesome. There wasn't a single soul who knew what it was like to be me, but they still compared me to him, and passed their judgment. I just wanted it all to stop! I couldn't be him, and I knew in my heart that no matter how hard I tried, that I could never be as good as him. As such, I still didn't give up. I tried, and tried to impress my parents, and prove my superiority, but it was as pointless as it was tiring. All I wanted was to ensure that in this

sibling rivalry, I won the competition. Enrollment was just around the corner and I spent the entire summer pondering how I could show my brother up in school. 6th grade was going to be it for me. My time to shine, I thought to myself. Boy was I wrong! Not only was it difficult for me to make friends, but I also couldn't prove my worth to my parents. I was constantly asking myself why? The kids at school definitely did not help my situation. I was bullied horrifically, to the point that I was afraid to even go to school. I felt unloved by everyone, and thought to myself that if I died, that no one would even care. The torment was nonstop, and it got so bad to the point that it started affecting my grades, and my psyche. As a defense mechanism, I put up a brick wall around my heart, and refused to let anyone in. Soon, I fell into depression, and wanted to end my own life at the age of 12, so on multiple occasions, I tried and failed. I didn't take it as a sign from above, I took it as proof of my uselessness and I became filled with hatred. I became something I wasn't, someone who I couldn't even look at in the mirror every morning, someone I was ashamed to be, someone who was crying out for someone to save him from his dismal emptiness. At age 13, I began high school. I thought to myself, more reason to hate humanity, and boy was I right! Kids constantly questioned my sexuality, but before I even knew it myself, I was being labeled as homosexual. This was unheard of for me at the time. My parents were both religious extremists, and for years have been brainwashing me into thinking that homosexuality should be frowned down upon. So I did what they approved of. I began dating females just to make them happy, and to thwart any suspicions about my sexuality. As time went on, I sunk deeper and deeper into depression and I finally reached the point of no return. I felt uncomfortable. I knew something was wrong, but I didn't think it was with me. Soon enough, at age 14, I met a girl who changed my whole outlook on life, and her name was Tatiana. She gave me a new lease on life. She began tearing away the wall I hid behind, brick by brick. I soon found my voice. I learned how to put my foot down, and not let people trample all over me, and what I stood for. I began demanding respect with an iron fist! My life began to change for the better, but it still wasn't perfect. I still felt something was missing, but I didn't know what it was. My sophomore year was when I realized what it was that I knew was missing. I found love. My first love, Jeremy, opened my eyes, and my heart. With him, I found where I stood with my sexuality, and never wanted to leave his side. I soon discovered that all good things had to eventually come to an end. We ended our secret love, and I again felt lonely. It was if I didn't have anyone. This all changed my third year of high school when I met my other best friend, Junior. He was the sunshine that I needed to brighten up my cloudy days. He gave me a reason to smile. He brought me joy, and just being in his presence took away all of the pain, and the sorrow I kept in my heart. I was happy, and extremely grateful to have him, and Tatiana as best friends. They saved me from myself. They took away the hurt, and I finally had a reason to smile, and love myself again. They saw the good in me that for years, others failed to notice. They gave my life the gift of meaning, and I will forever be indebted to them. I'm a firm believer in everything happens for a reason, and I guess fate had something in store for me, that's why the events in my life unfolded as such. For me, everything that happened to me up until now has contributed to a particular part of me. I'm a distinguished individual, and I deserve to be defined as such. It took me a while, but I found myself, the real me. I'm happy I did, and wouldn't trade it for the world.

STORY
STORY

The Long Walk

BY MATT GAHLER

Roy was anxious. He checked the watch on his left wrist and saw that he was twelve minutes late for his shift at the factory. This tardiness had recently become a regular occurrence and Roy knew that if it wasn't for the union, he would have been fired already. His boss, Frank, had told him this much last Friday when he had pulled Roy into his office for a meeting.

"Have a seat." Frank had said pointing to a fold-out chair placed directly before his desk. Frank sat opposite Roy and began to shove papers into a folder with the words "Workman's Comp" scribbled across the front in black marker.

"I know I was late a couple of times and I'm real sorry." Roy began.

"Three times last week alone." Frank replied. He looked across the desk at Roy who looked down to the floor.

"Like I said, I'm real sorry about that. I couldn't get my car to start. The damn ignition...thing..." Roy's voice trailed off. He couldn't think of the right words to use and didn't have the energy to make the lie more believable. Frank knew that Roy's license had been suspended three months ago and since then Roy had been forced to either walk or take the bus.

Frank replied, "Look son, you've worked here for almost three years. The first two, you were one of my best men, but this last year... Look, I know that Amy leaving you was rough. I get that. And everyone's allowed some time to... let things settle. But Roy, it's been almost a year now and life has to go on...The job still needs to get done."

Roy shifted in his seat. He forced his eyes up from the floor to look at Frank. He could see a look of pity in Frank's eyes. Roy had seen that look quite a bit lately, at least once a day.

"I know Frank. Thanks for all your patience. I know I haven't done my best lately but that's all gonna change, I promise."

"Sure. Are you still going to those meetings?"

Roy had tried the meetings. He sat in a circle of chairs in the center of a church basement that a judge had directed him to. He sipped his burnt coffee and smoked his filterless cigarettes and listened as each member of the group recounted their sad stories. Every night for three weeks he listened to the same sad people tell the same sad stories and every night, when it was his turn to speak, he declined. He couldn't bring himself to physically stand up and emotionally strip down in front of strangers.

Roy checked his watch again. He was now twenty minutes late. Time was moving faster than his legs. He tightened his grip around the rubber base of the hammer in his right hand and began to walk faster. To distract himself from the storm that was beginning to brew in his belly, he began to run scenarios through his head, potential excuses he could use for being late today. His head began to spin. With each step his stomach turned with the revolting mix of alcohol and fried chicken that he had consumed last night. He considered forcing himself to vomit to relieve the nausea but decided against it. He was in no mood to see the red, bloody bile that would inevitably cover the sidewalk before him. He thought that maybe he could wait and vomit at work and say that it was food poisoning, but he knew that it would never work. Nobody would believe him.

Roy came to an intersection and stopped. His head was starting to throb and with each passing car the ache spread through his scalp and down his back, tightening his shoulders. He squeezed his eyes shut and tried to block out the pain.

"Mommy, what's wrong with him." Roy heard from beside him. He opened his eyes to see a little girl with short, brown curly hair pointing at him.

"Don't point Celina, it's rude." Her mother said pushing Celina's arm down. The mother looked up at Roy with the same look of pity that he had seen so often lately. He realized that he was hunched over and shaking on the sidewalk. He pulled the hood of his jacket up to try to cover his face, to try and shield himself from the judgement he felt from the world.

"Maybe I could just step out into traffic." Roy thought to himself. He reasoned that if the car was going slowly enough he could get hit without causing any real damage, just a quick trip to the hospital and a prescription for some painkillers. Then he wouldn't have to worry about coming up with an excuse for being late and maybe he could even take a temporary leave of absence and get a few days off with pay. He could spend the days sitting on the couch and watching game shows the way he and Amy used to do when they were first married and couldn't afford a real honeymoon. In those days, Amy would lay across the couch with her head on Roy's lap and dangle her soft, freshly groomed feet off the end and Roy would run his hand up and down Amy's arm, tracing the blue veins that twisted like roads on a map just beneath the surface of her pale skin.

The traffic light turned green. Celina's mother grabbed her hand and walked her quickly

across the street, glancing briefly back at Roy. Once again he could see the look of pity in her eyes and he wondered how a person could spare so much pity for a stranger.

Roy stepped off the curb and into the cross walk. He realized that his walk was starting to become a hobble and he could feel the storm building in his belly. He knew immediately that he was going to be sick. He crossed the street and ducked behind a tall, brick warehouse that led into an empty alley. His head began to spin again. He closed his eyes and leaned forward, clutching his knees for support so that he wouldn't fall face first onto the gravel. He could feel the warm liquid slowly enter his throat and quickly exit his mouth. The vomit came in waves, a high tide of bile crashing against the rocks beneath him. After a moment the storm settled. Roy could smell the rancid stench from the puddle in front of him. He pushed himself upright and opened his eyes as he wiped his lips with his shirt sleeve. He staggered out from behind the building and spotted a pay phone on the corner, just a few feet ahead of him. He reached into his pocket and pulled out two quarters, deposited them into the slot and dialed Frank's extension. The call went straight to Frank's voicemail and Roy was relieved that he would not have to speak to Frank in person. He wouldn't have to hear the tone of Frank's voice as he lied.

"Frank, it's Roy." He croaked. He realized that the acidity of the vomit had provided a roughness to his voice that he could use to his advantage. "Sorry I didn't call earlier, I just woke up. I have the flu and took some medicine that must have knocked me out. I can't make it in today. Sorry."

Roy hung up the phone and started to walk back in the direction from which he had just come. Though he had only walked a handful of blocks it seemed like he had been walking for an eternity. All he could think of was sleep.

He glided through the front door and closed it behind him. He walked down the narrow hallway and straight into his living room. He took off his jacket and threw it onto the hardwood floor next to the couch where his sitting chair used to be. He had not refurnished the home since Amy had left and, with the exception of a few pieces of furniture than his mother had given him, all that remained were empty shelves and open spaces.

He sat on the couch and turned on the television. A man discussing the importance of healthy eating habits appeared on the screen. He flipped through a few channels and settled on a game show where a short, bespectacled man was trying to guess the capital of Kentucky for a three-thousand dollar prize.

Roy set the remote on the floor and laid back, resting his head on a lumpy throw pillow. He fell asleep immediately.

The dream came first in blurry, random segments: visions of Amy in her wedding dress, the expensive sheets that she had proudly purchased with a gift card that she had received

from her parents for Christmas, which still covered the bed. Slowly these segments began to align into vivid clips of the night that Roy was arrested.

Roy was sitting hunched over in the back of a police car. His hands were cuffed tightly behind him. His arms stuck to the vinyl interior of the seat and the knuckles on his right hand throbbed and burned as though he had skinned them against a concrete wall. He found it difficult to breathe. His lips felt dry and crusted, as if they had been glued together. There was a large wet spot that covered the crotch of his pants. He wasn't sure whether the spot was urine or alcohol but either way, he was uncomfortable. He lifted his head to look out the window and saw Amy, bathed in flashing red and blue light, standing on the sidewalk in front of their house. She was waving her arms frantically and screaming at a police woman who was trying to guide her toward an ambulance. "I'm fine. This is all a misunderstanding!" was all that Roy could hear through the car window. He saw an open wound just above Amy's left eyebrow. From the wound, blood was slowly dripping down her cheek and mixing with tears that were seeping from her swollen eyes. The mixture of blood and tears looked like water-color paint staining the canvas of her pale skin.

Roy woke with a jolt. His breath was short and he was drenched with sweat. The room was completely dark, except for the glow from the television screen. He sat up and checked his watch. It read eight-thirty. He had slept the entire day. He pushed himself up onto his feet and walked toward the kitchen. The answering machine on the counter was blinking but he ignored it. He couldn't bring himself to listen just yet. He was sure it was Frank calling, either to express his anger at Roy for skipping his shift, or worse, he was calling to tell Roy that he hoped he felt better which would make Roy feel guilty for having lied to Frank again.

Roy opened the refrigerator. He was starving but there was no food only a bottle of whiskey that stood upright on the top shelf. He grabbed the bottle and examined it. He saw that there was only enough left for one shot, maybe two. He would have to go down the block to the liquor store soon. He suddenly felt tired again, more tired than he had ever felt in his life. He wanted to cry but there was nothing left in him to come out. He stood still for a moment in the florescent glow of the refrigerator light then he lifted the bottle to his lips.

This piece is an excerpt from a short story

*entitled **Gone, But Not Too Far**. It picks up after the narrator's release from jail, having been arrested for sleeping in a New York City subway station. **BY MARK MACNEIL***

I turned the corner on to Canal Street and was swept up by the relentless current of pedestrians that flowed through the city's artery, persuading me away from my predetermined destination. The city bustled with a borrowed life. In the countryside men and women farmed and lived off the land, feeding their souls on devotion and compassion. In New York you were mere prey, and the city was a carnivorous mantrap which mankind had unwittingly sprung upon himself. It subsisted on its vulnerable denizens', draining compassion and empathy, one degrading incident after another. It infected, like a virus infiltrating its host. It replicated, growing in number, strength and lethality within its adoptive minion, commencing its will until it had used the vessel to the point of depletion, only to consume another soul and then another.

I cursed the precepts of law and order and this rotten city in all its depravity, damning my insidious and predatory captor, lamenting the burdens planted on the backs of the city's homeless -the non-monetary taxation imposed upon the men, women, and even children who improvise their beds at the end of a subway platform, in a park, or under a bridge, who lay huddled underneath blankets along the edges of the sidewalks and the riverbanks, claiming unused space against the threat of arrest; those who are exposed to the elements daily and nightly, who have grown weary of the festering homeless shelters laden with sickness and violent crimes committed by violent criminals. One day you tally your lot and realize that your options for survival have become limited and pervasively unpleasant. You gradually become desensitized to the humiliation of being exiled from allegedly respectable establishments and supposedly public spaces, until you come to accept it; you become numb to the fact that you can no longer enjoy a meal in a restaurant

or walk through a park without mothers picking up their children and heading in the opposite direction; the humiliation of being gawked at in disgust, rebuked, and, at a glance, attributed with an unforgivable indolence which erodes the part of you that gives a shit about essentially anything. Eventually, you collect scars doled out by the ceaseless barrage of physical assaults, ill-wishes, and degradation, the nasty remarks handed to you by strangers in warm coats. You're scorned daily by people you've never met before and ostracized by society at large, removed from the social context of the world around you for neglecting to recognize the higher human ambition you were taught in school that you needed. It becomes about harm reduction, weighing your options and choosing the course you hope will be least disastrous. Madmen and Mother Nature compel you to seek refuge in the subway stations to escape the bombardment of menacing winter storms, or be otherwise vulnerable to her ferocity, but even underground you are susceptible to the whim of the psychopath that treads in darkness intending to roll you over in your sleep on to the track ditch below as the train squeals into the station, grinding to a halt.

When you're out in the cold you encountered few who were genuinely concerned with the plight of the downtrodden, and still fewer desired to experience life from the vantage point of a body so dehumanized, to sink into the gutters, to comprehend the pain that lies behind a seemingly vacant gaze or the mania behind a searing glare that would sting your eyes to catch. Their condition, like that of the sick and elderly, reminds people of their own vulnerability. For a lot of professionals living in New York City and in other cities like it, passing those rugged tramps camping on cardboard slabs up and down the sidewalks, causing the coffee to drip onto their hands as they rubbernecked to glimpse the monstrosity on their commute from their homes to the subway each morning, was an insufferable nuisance and an eyesore to boot. So whenever a local police precinct would get a certain amount of complaints about bums, they would make sweeps through the neighborhood, selectively enforcing loitering laws and locking away the vagrants, thus criminalizing homelessness. The knights and lords of this convoluted peace crusade punished the criminals who dared sleep on the ground by having us lay on another concrete floor, the difference was that in jail we were deprived of the few diminished liberties that had remained in our everyday lives on the outside.

"Now to get my head on straight," I muttered to myself, cracking a half-assed smile at no joke as I crossed the busy intersection without waiting for the light to turn. The sidewalk was cracked in front of the liquor store near the mouth of the Manhattan Bridge, which had been in business since the 1960's. Its facade was in a state of decay, its paint curling and crumbling away and the sign hanging crookedly on a rusted scaffold. Inside, there was a barrier of bulletproof-glass guarding the merchandise and the lone clerk from the store's inebriated patrons; it had a narrow indent at the center where the customers piled in and pointed through the glass at the booze they wanted, or tried to mouth the words to the clerk who must have read lips. I pointed to a bottle of Peach Cisco for \$2.25 in the first row, using most of what was left in my pocket to pay for it. The cashier took my coins without asking for ID, stuck the bottle into a brown paper bag and spun it around in the bulletproof-glass Lazy Susan. I palmed it, turned for the door, and walked outside. A

relieved sigh escaped my throat. I looked around for a moment, then chose a direction and started walking as I twisted the cap off the Cisco.

I ambled over the bridge toward Brooklyn, taking slow sips from my bottle. I was approaching the crest of the bridge, watching the East River cut through the city, or rather, as it was forced through the city's great barriers, like a flood of inmates being pushed through the corridors of an institution. I gazed out beyond the point where the river fed into the mouth of the harbor, beyond the Brooklyn Bridge to the south, and considered my tribulations: the disheveled chaos of living on the streets; the regimented confinement of being imprisoned.

For most of my short life I had endured peoples' ridicule: judgement from people who frowned upon my dalliances and the way that I conducted myself, those who failed to understand that my life had been interwoven with my blighted reality. "Fuck 'em," I asserted. It had dawned on me that somebody will always be there to give me shit for whatever I do -whether I wore a nice suit or my pants sagging off my ass, filled with my own shit- so I might as well do whatever the fuck I felt like doing without worrying whether my actions would coincide with the arbitrary precepts set forth by a society which had been constructed for the purpose of fiscal pursuit rather than the contentment of an individual's heart. My nomadic existence was a life which I had skillfully adapted to rather than tried to escape, whether or not there had been chances that I'd missed or choices I could have made that would have enabled me to flee from my hardships. Time and again I was berated, usually by strangers who had accused me of having no direction, being apathetic, not knowing how to conduct myself, and wandering aimlessly. To me, the concept of leading a conventionally wholesome, well-oiled, all-American existence built upon discipline and sacrifice -struggling, making the grade, overcoming insurmountable odds, planting my feet on terra firma, declaring a major, making ends meet, joining a gym, coming home to the wife, slapping the kids, signing a 30-year mortgage, cleaning the gutters, waking up before dawn, waiting all year for a two week vacation- had no appeal, I honestly felt that my condition of vagrancy was manageable. At least this way nobody depended on me and I couldn't let anyone down. I knew that I had a reasonable mind buried somewhere beneath the madness, and as long as I maintained a sense of myself and didn't let it go to the riptides, didn't succumb to the world that seemed to agree that I was an unsalvageable piece of human excrement lost in a pile, as long as I didn't allow myself to be isolated by building impenetrable walls around me, I would be alright.

My flickering neuroses had at last dwindled as I emptied the bottle into me. I listened for the pulse of the world: people zipping past me on bicycles, cars rolling across the bridge, breaking the air and going ka-chunk over the metal braces; whistles from the barges in the rolling water below. I walked along as the river rolled fluently through the colossal city, bound on either side by imposing human constructs, arriving at the same conclusion as other rivers. There was no more urgency to reach any particular destination. I sat on the ground with my back against the railing, drinking unhurriedly, watching the river bleed endlessly into the bay.

Father and Son

**BY CARLOS
MARTINEZ**

A young boy is sitting alongside with his father in his study. The father coughs wheezily. A vinyl jazz record plays on the turntable. The father tells his son of his teachings. The father is a cynic. He has lived too many years while the son still hasn't begun to experience life. The boy doesn't look at him in the eye. He talks in a single bland rhythm while drinking a scotch.

"Please stop talking, that's enough for today." Impatiently the boy interrupts.

"You need to learn some of what I've got to say."

"Let me be a boy. Still young as it is."

"Little boys grow up to be tragically mistreated by those close to them. I can't let that happen to you."

"But I know better this time. I can pick out my own friends who are trustworthy."

"I had a friend that I thought was trustworthy. But he couldn't trust himself."

"You yourself believe that everyone goes through development stages. And that there may be consequences if one were to skip out on life. I'm still in my premature stage."

"That is why you're to take advantage. You yourself will surpass other people who will be lost. Very lost that they cannot find their path that is in contact with their eyes. You won't make the same mistakes I did."

"But we need the mistakes to learn from them."

"Not so. They, in a different life, can bring you pain if ever you look back on them."

"What is pain but a sense of being enlightened to reality?"

Father speaks harshly to him, "Pain only cripples you. You must succeed. Both mentally and physically."

The boy leaps out of his seat and goes for the turntable. He smashes the record on the hard wooded floor. The father crouches down to the bits and pieces of the record. He holds them in his hands. The boy looks down at him. He crouches too. He sees a twinkle in his father's left eye, jaw relaxed, and trembling hands.

"Those were once your father's records?" Questions the boy.

The father still has his head down looking at the record pieces. His voice cracks.

"He never had any time for me. I was left alone. No one to raise me well. He soon was gone from my life. All he had salvaged throughout his years were his record collections."

The boy notices this. Why the father tries so hard to give him a better life. He felt childish. Naïve to ever do such a thing. But he knew that deep down inside, there was still a child in that beaten up old man.

"Let's put on another album." The boy compensates.

Father takes out another record and lays the needle on it. As he reclines his chair back listening to the mellow tunes the singer croons out, the boy approaches him. He and the father both hug each other for so long they still haven't let go after the first song finishes, then the next, then the next.

My Savior Girls

BY BEVERLY TERRY

Thanksgiving Day

Thanksgiving Day was filled with great family, food and fun! Wesley (my older brother) finished cooking the turkey around 8am. It had roasted to a sweet golden brown with succulent meat beneath the butter crispy skin. I and my younger sister Maria and paternal cousins, Laverne, Poo and Bridget had finished preparing all of the other dishes the night before. By the time my younger brother, James, and cousin, Anthony (who we called Manky, never knew why) arrived with their girlfriends, Janine and Cantrice, all of us girls where all showered, dressed in our best, and ready to begin our day of thanks. Everyone in attendance agreed it was a terrific meal. After we ate, we cleaned off the table and put away the left overs; that is when the fun really began. We turned on some music and started dancing, laughing and joking around. In fun, we decided to put on a Michael Jackson dance contest. James, Poo, and Mank were the contestants, while the rest of us were the audience and judges. It was so cool when Poo ended up winning, considering James and Manky went all out with MJ costumes.

Friday night - the Explosion

It was about 7:30 pm when I got home from shopping for a new coat at the mall. While Maria, Lavern, and Poo where in the kitchen heating up leftovers from thanksgiving

dinner, Bridget was setting up the VCR for our Friday night scary movie festival. I wanted a few minutes to myself before joining the others, so I went into my sister's bedroom to rest a minute. The doorbell rang around 9:15pm that late Friday evening; it was Lloyd, a friend of my older brother Wesley. Lloyd was a 6 foot 4, former well known neighborhood basketball player, so, everyone knew about his skills on the court all over NYC. 'World Be Free' was his neighborhood legend, and the fall away jumper was his shot. He was not only a credit to his neighborhood; he was also a credit to his race. His future looked very promising, until he traded his skills in for a crack pipe. What can I say, it was the 1980's and crack was claiming souls, day and night. The night Lloyd showed up at our house, he smelled and looked like he hadn't bathed in weeks. He was there looking for my brother Wesley, who was taking a bath in our bathroom, because his tub (upstairs in his apt) kept stopping up. "Is your brother home?" Lloyd asked Maria in his raspy voice. She told him Wesley was taking a bath. Lloyd asked Maria to tell Wesley to come to the door, because it was important that he speak with him. We all knew, whenever Lloyd needed money, he would come looking for my brother Wesley. Wesley always respected Lloyd's legend.

After retrieving Lloyd's message for Wesley, Maria locked the door back. She didn't know what it was about that night, but something urged her to lock the door behind her. Usually she would let Lloyd wait inside, but not this time. Once she relayed Lloyd's message to Wesley through the bathroom door, she rejoined my cousins back on the couch for movie night. Some time had passed and Wesley still hadn't emerged from the bathroom. Yet, Lloyd was still in the hall waiting impatiently for my brother. By the time Lloyd knocked again, Wesley was already headed to the door. While I was in the bedroom watching the news (at 9:35 pm) I heard a loud booming noise come from the front of the apartment. The next thing that happened puzzled me to my feet, and leads me to the front of the house to inspect what was going on? However, just as I was about to head out of the room, Bup, my sister's Golden Border Collie, busted into the bedroom extremely frightened. She quickly ran past me and into the adjacent bathroom and wedged herself behind the toilet and wall. She would not come out. Puzzled and anxiously I rushed into the living room to find out what was going on. I was met with a big grey ball of smoke and everyone screaming hysterically. As the smoke started to clear and I got closer,

I saw my cousins on one side of the living room screaming, and Maria and Wesley standing amidst the smoke with Lloyd, screaming at him, "What did you do?" "What did you do!" at the top of their lungs. As I got closer, the horrid sight became clearer, Lloyd's hands were gone! All that was left to his left hand, were 4 dead fingers split like a chocolate banana down to his severed wrists! His right hand's fingers were completely detached from their joints, except for his pointer that was hanging on by the remaining skin, dangling from his exploded wrist. There was blood spewing everywhere from his severed radial and ulnar arteries. Wesley and Maria's clothing was already covered in his drug infused blood. I couldn't believe my eyes; Lloyd had completely destroyed his hands! There was blood, skin and bone fragment everywhere! I wanted to run screaming to the back of the house and hide, just like the dog had, but couldn't turn away from the horrific sight.

All I could see was blood and a big gaping hole in Lloyd's triple fat goose. Wesley seemed to be frightened into shock by the dreadful bloody scene. Each time I asked him what happened, all he could do was shake his head in disbelief at Lloyds bloody severed stumps. My eyes could not grow any bigger; I had never witnessed anything so gruesome in my young life. My cousins were screaming, the neighbors were starting to crowd around our front door in revulsion, and everywhere I looked, there was Lloyd's splattered remains. My heart was pounding and I didn't know what to do. But suddenly, something inside of me took over. I wasn't a scared 17 year old girl anymore; I was the one who had to turn this bloody chaos into a manageable situation. But first, I had to get my family out of harm's way. So, I grabbed my brother by the shoulder and turned him around, I asked, "Wesley, are you okay?" I really couldn't tell because of all of the smoke and blood. He slowly shook his head yes. On my way to inspect Maria, Lloyd stumbled into the living room, but Maria and I helped him to the couch, before he hit the floor. Lloyd was sweating profusely and his eyes started rolling up into his head. He started begging god to spare his life; he started begging me to not let him go into shock. Lloyd cries, "please don't let me go into shock. Please! Please!" I told him I would do all I could to help him, but I couldn't promise anything. At that moment I picked up the telephone and called 911 for help.

I remember the operator kept telling me to calm down, because I must have been hysterical. In all honesty, I don't recall being anything but numb. After I hung up the phone, I told Maria to watch Lloyd, while I go get some towels from the linen closet. I wanted to use them to tie around Lloyds forearms to try and stop the bleeding. Even though, Maria was just as scared as I was, she was the only one I could count on during that crisis. Wesley was still in some form of shock and my cousins were still screaming and crying. Honestly, on the outside I was cool, but inside I was screaming, "oh my god, over and over." Throughout it all, Maria worked alongside me. She kept applying the cold compresses to Lloyds head and face to keep him coherent, because he had been slipping in and out of consciousness for several minutes. I was becoming afraid that he wouldn't be able to regain consciousness at all eventually. The impact of the explosive (super M80) was so powerful, that it dismembered all but one of his fingers from his right hand and split four of his fingers down to his forearm on his left hand. The explosive blew his thumb into several pieces of tissue and bloody bone fragments. At one point during the chaos, the panic-stricken room hushed in an inhale of silence, it was when I started tying the freshly washed white towels around Lloyd's bloody forearms. Everyone in the room watched in total amazement, as I gathered the lost fingers from the floor and wrapped them up with the remains of his severed wrists and hands. I found two of his fingers at the threshold of our front door. It was a miracle that we were able to keep Lloyd conscious throughout the traumatic nightmare. Lloyd's body started to jerk back and forth on the couch, as if he was having a convulsion. I knew we had to get him to the hospital quick! My cousins finally started to calm down after I covered his bloody stubs; however, my brother was still in a daze? I called 911 again, because the fear of Lloyd dying in our living room wasn't something I wanted any of us to deal with. This time, I could remember the call clearly. I was screaming into the receiver hysterically, "He's dying, please come quick!" Lloyd's red river

started seeping through the clean white towels slowly, and our heartbeats started to quicken at the sight of it. We knew he was losing too much blood to hold on much longer, coherently anyway. Suddenly, I could hear an ambulance's siren blaring from outside the window. I didn't know if it was for Lloyd but I hoped. Wesley still wasn't responding well. I turned to him and started shaking him and then I slapped him to try and trigger some sort of reaction, other than shaking his head and mumbling "what did you do?" the ambulance finally arrived, I told Maria to chaperon Lloyd down to the lobby, to meet the paramedics. I needed to help Wesley. She started to cry and lose her cool, but I convinced her to stay calm, because it was almost over. Lavern reluctantly agreed to assist Maria in getting Lloyd down to the lobby, in fact, on their way down the hallway; Laverne dropped her side of Lloyd.

Maria then wrapped his bloody arm around her neck and dragged him the rest of the way alone. When they exited the elevator, the cops and EMT's met them in the lobby. The response of the first police officer on the scene was "holy fuck!" The white towels holding Lloyds bloody stumps together, were completely absorbed by his blood. The paramedics, strapped Lloyd to the gurney and rushed him away to Saint Mary's hospital. They told us we saved his life. Other than a quick 1 minute news story on NBC news the following night, that was the last time we would see or hear from Lloyd for the next two months. The next few hours at our house that infamous night consisted of police officers questioning us, the bomb squad securing the area, and forensics taking specimens for the case they were building against Lloyd. The police wanted to charge him with Domestic Terrorism. The Detectives asked Maria and I the same questions over and over, "do you think he was trying to hurt your brother?" "Do you think he was trying to hurt your Family?" We just didn't know. We just didn't understand, or could explain why Lloyd would come to our door, and ignite dangerous explosives. The detectives couldn't take us down to the station because we were minors and my mom wasn't expected back from visiting my grandmother in VA until Sunday evening. By the time the detectives finished collecting evidence, and left, they had tracked blood and bone fragments throughout the house and hallway. Wesley was so distraught, that he left and went over to his mother in law's place to be with his children's mother. My cousins went home early because they were traumatized. As a matter of fact, we were all traumatized. Maria and I were left alone to deal with that entire ordeal.

Maria washed down the walls of flesh and bone and I moped up the remaining blood from the floor in the hallway and our apt. I remember we were able to clean all of the skin from the walls, except for one piece of flesh and bone permanently stuck. The stain would remain there until we moved. Maria and I felt so alone, everyone had left us and we really started to miss our mother. I remember Maria saying "I was traumatized for days, until mommy got home." She was only thirteen years old. Our nerves were shot and we were both having nightmares for days, yet we stayed strong for one another. Each day Bup our Collie, moved closer to leaving the bathroom, but it would take my eldest sister Denise returning home from her trip, to get her to leave the small space. Once our mom returned

home that Sunday evening, Maria and I felt a lot better. She always makes us feel safe. The first time in a long while me and Maria crawled into bed with my mom, and had the first good night sleep since the unexplained explosion. Almost two months later, Lloyd returned to our door to show us the results of our tireless efforts. The doctors had stitched the four remaining fingers back together on his left hand, but the thumb was gone. His right hand looked as if they fused everything left to his hand and created one extra-long finger. It resembled ET's pointer. From that moment on Lloyd referred to Maria and me as his savior girls. He vowed to never forget us for saving his life. However, he still hasn't explained why he came to our house with explosives.



**HOLY COW!!!
WE'VE MADE IT TO THE END, ONCE AGAIN.
HOPEFULLY YOU FEEL INSPIRED TO GET YOUR CREATIVITY
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EDITORS ARE TOO LAZY TO DO IT FOR YOU.
WE PRETTY MUCH ACCEPT CREATIVE WORKS OF ALL
KINDS.**

**WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE COVER? I PRETTY BADASS
RIGHT??**

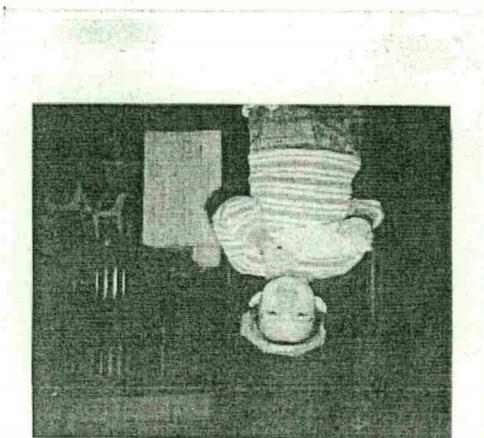
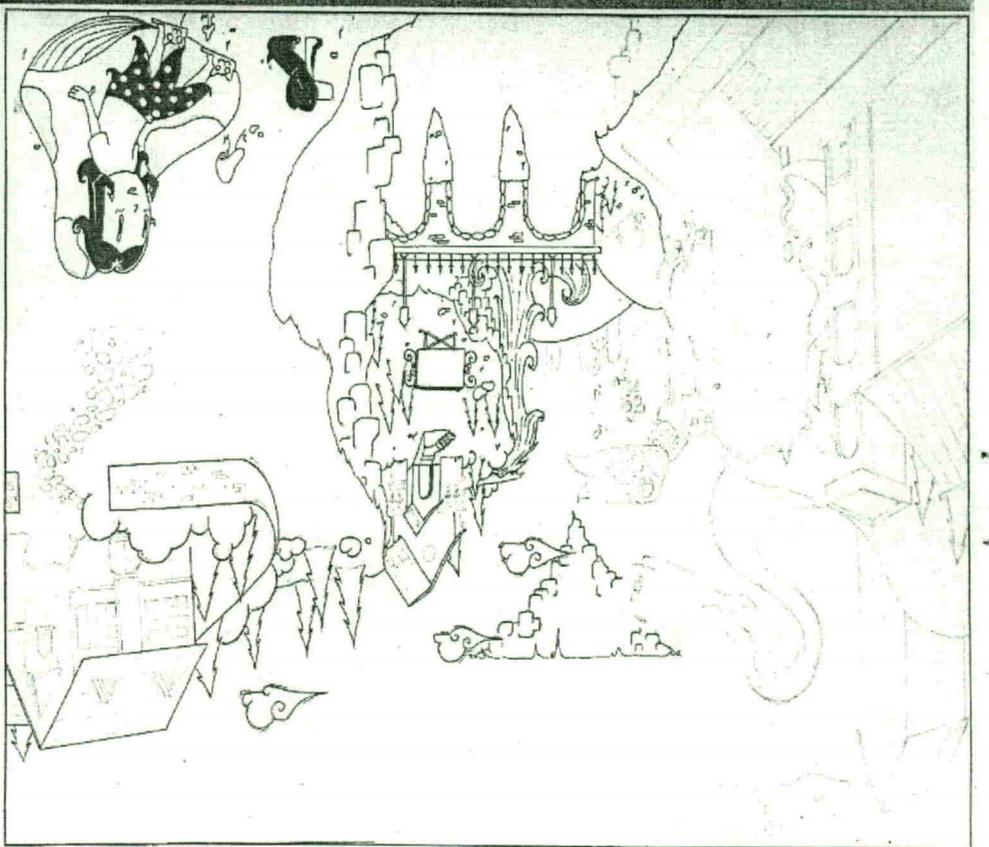
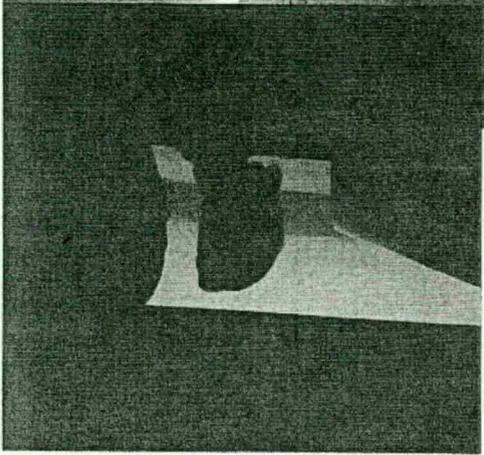
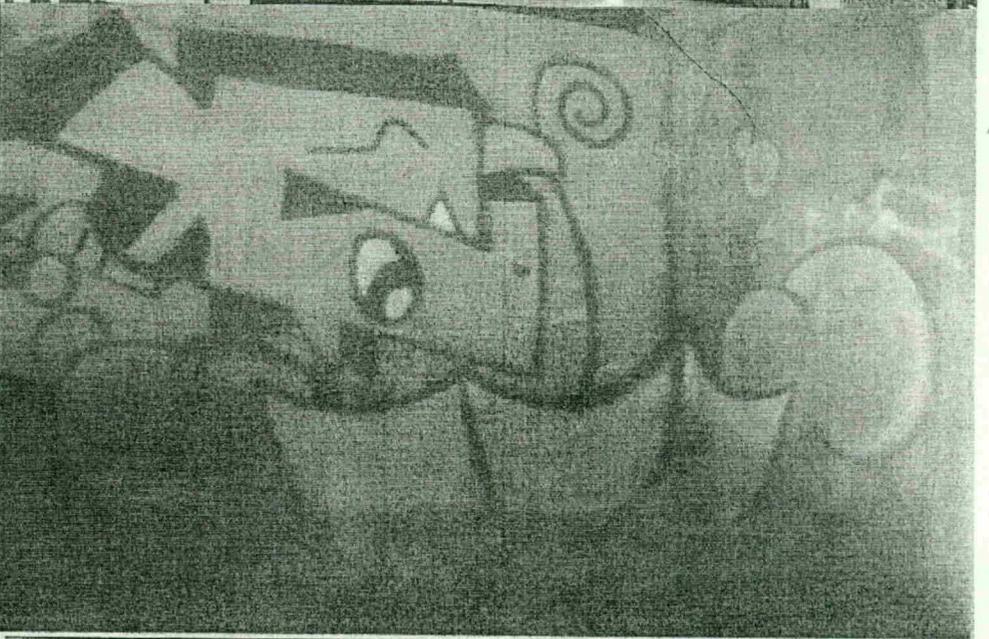
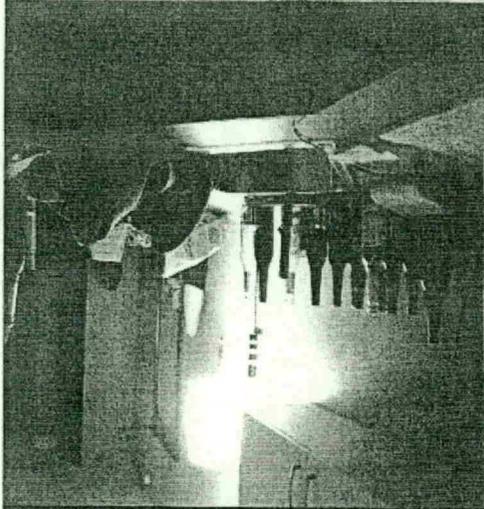
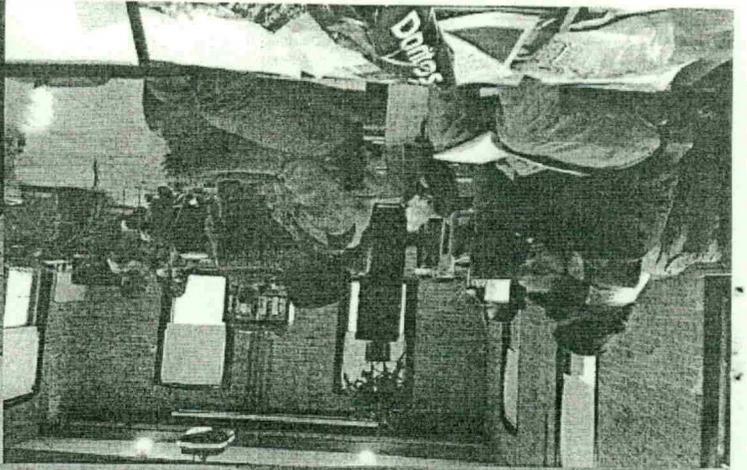
**IT WAS DONE BY KAYLA LOPEZ AND REY HARRIS
THEY MAKE A PRETTY DAMN GOOD TEAM, RIGHT?!
KAYLA ALSO DID THE ART ON PG. 2, 16, 17, 30 AND 49.
KEVIN BURNS DID THE ART ON PG. 25.
RYAN DONG DID THAT SWEET ORIGAMI PIECE ON PG. 33.**

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN JOINING THE CLUB, ATTENDING
MEETINGS AND GETTING PANCAKES LIKE A BADASS
LUMBERJACK, HIT US UP!!!**

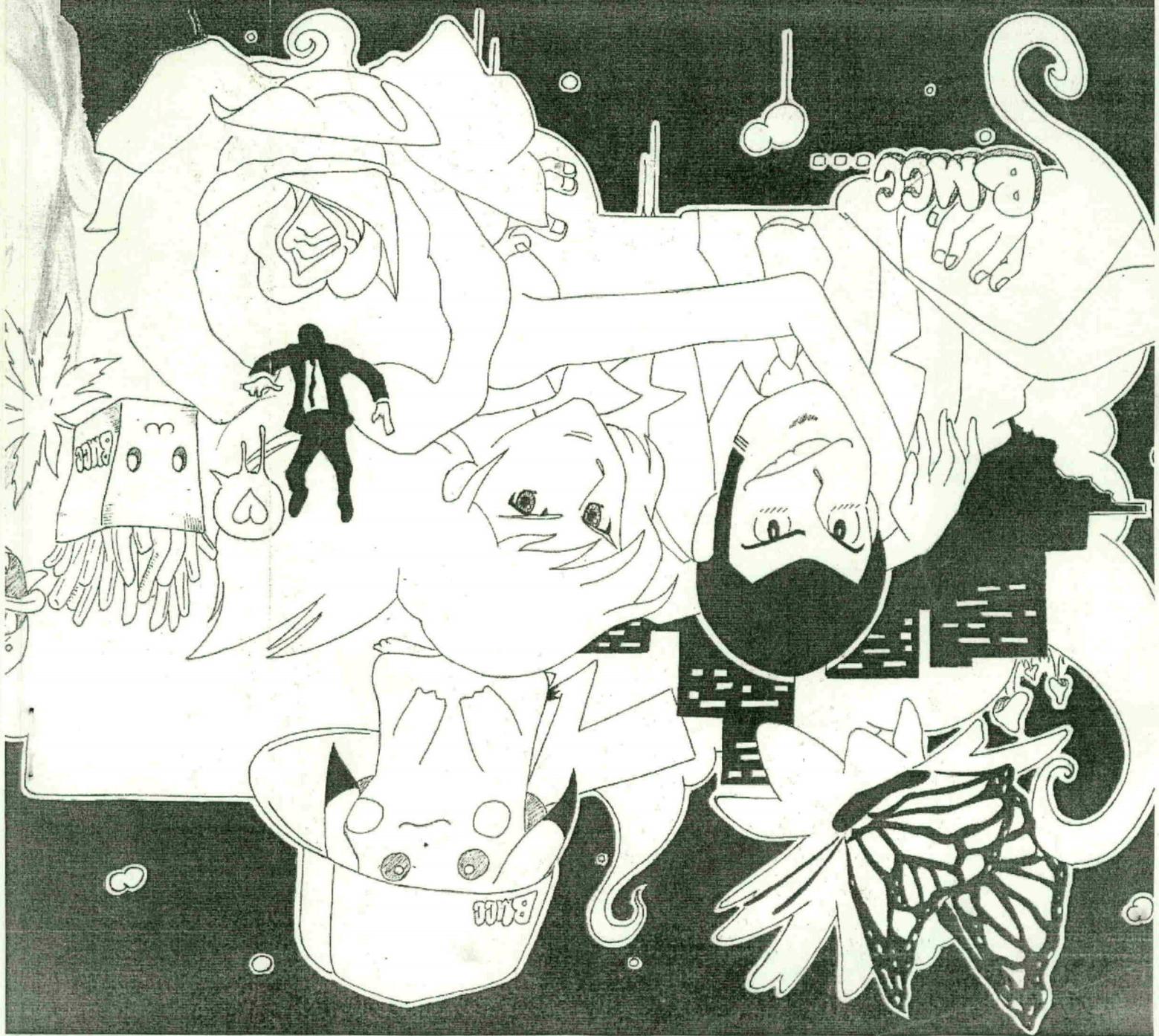
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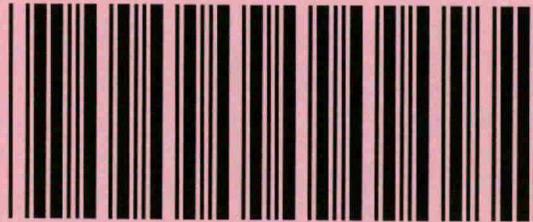
**THAT'S PRETTY MUCH IT.... NOW GET OFF YOUR ASS, GO
OUTSIDE AND EXPERIENCE LIFE. THEN WRITE ABOUT IT. OR
MAKE LOVE. OR ART. OR EAT A SANDWICH. OR FIGHT A
BUNCH OF NINJAS. OR DO THEM ALL AT THE SAME TIME!!!**

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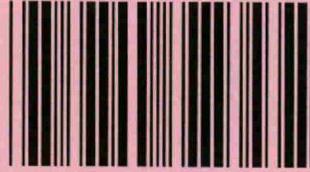


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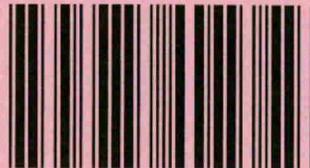
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