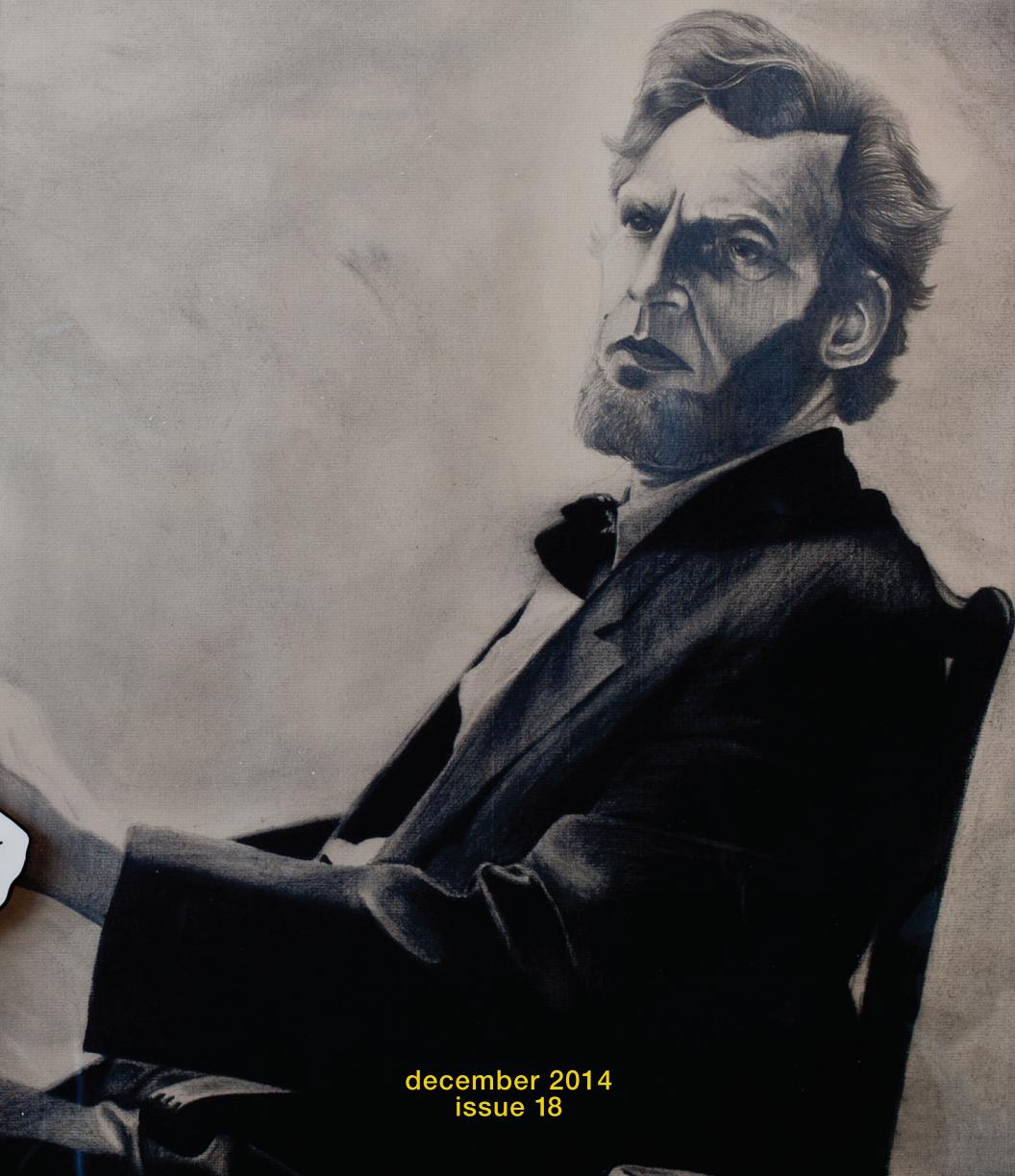
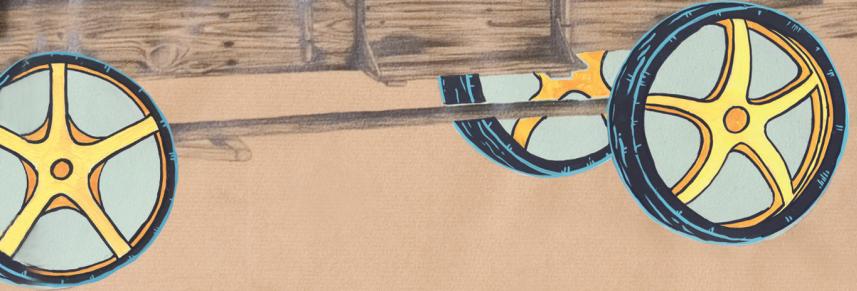


# USED GRAVITRONS



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POOR PEOPLES MARCH



# **USED GRAVITRONS QUARTERLY**

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# **EDITORIAL**

Dear readers,

This time of year the outside air is cold. Because this time of year the outside air is cold, there are a string of holidays to keep you warm. And because there are so many holidays, this time of year always has me thinking about things that supposedly do not exist. I am talking, of course, about ghosts, elves, Santa Claus, and Thanksgiving.

Are you even aware that Thanksgiving doesn't exist? Or are you one of the believers?

People love to use the argument that in order for something TO exist, the burden of proof lies on those wishing to prove it's existence. I disagree. And I digress.

We live in an amazing world. It is a proven fact that all things are now possible. And that possibility is a notion that will surely keep you warm on a homeless winter night, curled up in a midwestern phone booth with an ice-cold hotdog dinner. But Thanksgiving still does not exist.

Could anyone disagree that there ought to be a crack team of educated and able scientists and thinkers expending their talents and resources in full-scale efforts to disprove the existence of such things as bigfoots, jackalopes, and elves? I believe there is nothing of more importance than this undertaking. And you should believe it too.

This issue of Used Gravitrons is simultaneously concerned with all these things and none of them. You can't reasonably doubt the existence of extraterrestrials, other dimensions, or even goblins until you've fully doubted the existence of yourself. You know that a thing agreed upon is not necessarily a thing that is good.

You can't prove elves don't exist. If you disrupt the flencing of whales and the picking of berries, you might suffer only an ankle sprain or a death in the family. But if you build an unnecessary road to the president's home through an elf church, very bad things could happen indeed. Damage not their holy stones, lest your own machines of destruction turn against you. Treat them with respect. After all, it's good to make deals with elves; they keep their end of the bargain. And you simply can't prove they don't exist. Not even with science.

But if you still believe in Thanksgiving, there is no help for you.

Best,

Mike and Morgan



“Wednesday Adams”  
by Mike Lawrence

664 00000

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# Croop

By Jahla Sepponen

It is amazing how fast the dust collects. When was the last time I was here? My old sink. Old towels. I went to the bathroom, where her accessories, hand creams, and hair creams were neatly lined by the sink. I must have been terrible to live with. Never in order. Her home is happier now. I flush the toilet and the gurgling of water sounded the same as it used to. Inside was porcelain white. Clean, then cleaned again from the agitation of fighting and making up, fighting again, then finally saying, this is the last time. Her home is completely scrubbed of my presence.

We bought a parrot together. This was before we learned parrots could grow to be eighty. It was a blue-eyed cockatoo with thick circles of blue around its eyes and a yellow feather sticking up from its head. The night we bought the parrot she told me the blue reminded her of having children. She had never given birth, but I believed her when she said it was the same blue they give to perfect baby boys. I told her it was a blue I wanted to see some day.

Before leaving the bathroom I look in the shower, then again at the sink, and in passing, spot a layer of dust over the top of the toilet. If not for this dust I would be forgotten entirely. I tell myself it means something she did not clean it. I drag my finger in zig-zags through the dust and it pools on the crease of my finger in a grey crescent. I think of the moon and the how night looks from the balcony outside the bedroom. Her bedroom, now. The dust stays on my finger even as I shake my hand.

Every morning she would wake up, start coffee, and feed the parrot:

cutting a whole apple, a whole pear, and sprinkle the cubes of fruit with cinnamon before feeding him the mix. As much as I tried, or sometimes did not try at all, I always woke up late. “Won’t you wake up with me?” she often asked. “I’ll try tomorrow.” When I did wake up I would go to the cockatoo cage and yawn. The bird would stick his beak in my mouth and smell the acid on my tongue. This became a ritual, followed by him mocking the noise of my yawn. He picked up our sounds and the hum, buzz, bing of kitchen appliances; the garbage disposal, coffee grinder, microwave.

The zig-zagging left in the dust makes me feel like an intruder. I roll toilet paper around my hand and wipe away the remainder from the top. After it is clean I feel the guilt return. Same pocket, right side below my ribs and near the vital organs. There is no way of returning the dust or recreating it. Dust occurs without knowing, without me, without her, or our blue-eyed cockatoo. I realized it might be the last time I see this bathroom. The pocket hardens and the pain soaks up my chest like an icicle. I know this feeling is regret because I feel it worst in my heart. Yes, in the heart.

We named him Creep because it was more of a sound than a word. He could say Creep, but that is all. I often wondered what he thought it meant. “Pretty bird,” maybe.

She leads me to the bedroom and at first I think, this is forgiveness. She opens the closet and the afternoon sun lights her silk dresses. The birdcage is in the corner, and I can see the outline of Creep’s head like the edge of a jagged cliff. “I don’t think he likes it in here,” I say. She says nothing. Still she refuses to speak. All I want in the word is to hear her. She pulls out the cage, her eyes red and speaking on their own. I try not to listen. Creep climbs on the railing of his cage until his body faces mine. His torso is plucked clean. He tucks his beak to the last feather and pulls it from the pore. It is ugly to see him this way, without those magnificent feathers. Raw and pale, he wants something so deeply but does not have the words to define or ask it. “Creep,” he squawks. “Creep, Creep, Creep.”

I tried to take the bird but she would not allow it. After showing me his body she put the cage back into the closet and shut the door. “Creep, Creep,” he said. I was walked to the entryway. She paused and I missed the chance to beg her forgiveness. I never saw the dust again.

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# Neon Electric Sepulchers

by Mark T. Gerlach

After two hours of sleep interrupted by fits of panic, anxiety and bad dreams, Rex Maniacal woke up to the clangor of an alarm, which sounded like robots sneezing.

His boxers sagged in the back below his buttocks as he made his way across his studio apartment and into the bathroom to brush his teeth. Rex examined his bloodshot pupils in the mirror, and as a matter of habit without looking down, grabbed the toothpaste off the sink and sloshed a big glob on the bristles of his toothbrush. Swishing the toothbrush inside of his mouth in circular motions, a pasty, spumescence line of drool spewed down his chin.

Drearily, Rex rehearsed for an interview to discuss his band, the Neon Electric Sepulchers (NES), with radio icon Deek McCraigen, and in his head ran over possible questions that Deek might ask.

He cognitively teleported to McCraigen's L.A. radio studio. Rex, the lead singer of NES, was dressed in leather pants and a black silk shirt that was sloppy tucked into his waistband. The top of his shirt was unbuttoned, exposing a hairy Burt Reynolds-like chest.

"We were actually on the verge of breaking up before we caught a break," said Maniacal, snapping a match across the phosphate strip of a matchbook and lighting a cigarette with its tawny-colored flame.

"That's crazy to me," exclaimed McCraigen. "You guys were about to call it quits. So, then what happens? Some money comes rolling in and you're like 'hey maybe we have a shot at this? Let's ride out this music thing a little bit longer and see what happen...'"

"Yeah, I think so," replied Rex. "We got some cash from a TV placement for one of our songs: Golddigger Girls. It was for the opening credits of a low-budget cable reality series called Cali Girls Rock, about a team of women archeologists searching for precious stones in the Californian desert."

"That show sucked," said McCraigen with a facetious snicker. "Did they make more than one season? If they did it was one too long. Everyone's making reality shows nowadays with pretty girls, an obtuse premise and corny, gimmicky names... Let me get off that rant though before I pop a blood vessel. Regardless of the show being a flop, someone at Moon Tide Records hears Golddigger Girls, gets his mind blown and signs you guys

instantly, right?"

"Pretty much... Out of the two viewers who've seen Cali Girls Rock, we're super lucky Mean Gene Sorenson, who founded Moon Tide, was one of them. He was allegedly watching the show one night with his wife, or so he claims, caught the tune and fell in love with it. He ended up calling us into his office the next day."

"Did that moment ultimately change your life," asked McCraigen open-endedly. "What were you doing before the contract? And how old are you by the way?"

"45."

"Holy cow, you're old. I thought maybe you were in your late 30s. You don't look 45," McCraigen said audaciously.

"Well, thank you," Rex replied in a propitiating way that deflated his tired, aging ego.

"So, you're in your mid-40s. What's your living situation like before fame hits?"

"I was single and broke. It was bad. I lived in a dirty studio apartment. I could barely make rent and afford food. Rice and canned tuna fish was a lavish dinner."

"Yuck! What about girls, were you at least getting laid?"

"Not even," Rex chuckled. "I was lonely, and had a hard time finding a date."

With a pensive face, Rex puffed his cigarette. "When you're poor and unsuccessful women are not beating down your door. We'd lug our gear to a gig and play for 25 minutes to the bartender. When there's not a room of screaming fans women can't be bothered. Most of the chicks in N.Y.C. want a tall stockbroker dude. No one in NES was getting pussy back in those days. It was pussy drought season."

"Yeah, well I'm sure your sex life has done a 180-degree turn. It must be peachy beach vibes, palms trees and sunny climes... Your debut record Blast Off has, well, done just that – blasted up the charts. You've spent the last year touring the U.S. and Europe. You're on TV and in big budget videos. What's next for the band?"

With a touch of anxiety fluttering in his heart, Maniacal looked down at the floor and said, "We're just gonna keep making music. We're very blessed to be doing this. NES is currently working on some songs for an upcoming album. Stay tuned for that. Things are looking up."

"All right, that just about does it. We're out of time. I'd like to thank my guest Rex Maniacal of the very popular band Neon Electric Sepulchers

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for being my guest this morning. Check out the chart topping debut album from NES called Blast Off, if you haven't already. It's a fantastic record."

"Thanks Rex."

"Thank you Deek."

Just then Rex noticed through a filmy, opaque shower curtain that the bathroom clock radio said 8:20 a.m. His mind snapped back into current time like a tight rubber band; so quickly that Rex was almost surprised to be standing naked in the shower facing a grimy white and black tile wall opposite the spigot.

He shut the water, dried his head and the under-crevices of his chubby body with a semi-clean maroon washcloth (as that was the cleanest linen he had available), and rushed to get dressed.

His body looked short and stubby in suit pants and a wrinkled, white dress shirt (of which he almost suffocated himself closing the top button). Rex hurriedly fastened on a checkered gray tie and splashed aftershave on his smelly suit jacket. He snagged his briefcase (which was filled with dull, esoteric papers, a candy bar and an unused condom), as well as two baloney sandwiches from the fridge, and briskly fled out of the apartment, slamming the door behind him. The lock, as the key turned inside of it, clicked loudly. Rex jiggled the handle twice before jetting down the stairs.

Outside the streets were gushing with rain. Rex sprinted through the torrential downpour, and into a nearby subway station, where he waited for the crowded train.

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# The Fire Eaters

By K.C. Mead-Brewer

I still remember how small and light she was, no longer than a football or heavier than a box of donuts. We called her K. She was the oldest test subject we'd ever lost, and I suppose something about those six months of watching her grow in the lab had convinced me that she'd feel heavier when I finally got to hold her. But then, I suppose it's not really in the nature of ghosts to weigh very much.

I was still very young then, full of hope and the kind of doggedness that becomes its own engine. Not even their graves, it seemed, could dampen my confidence. Even as I'd marched through the dark of those woods to bury her, I was confident in the greater good of what Rose and I were doing. The woods, though--the woods had unnerved me. It feels funny to think of that now, being scared of the woods at night. But there was no doubt in my or anyone else's mind that there was something unnatural about the forest that surrounded Seeder's Hill. The only question anyone had was whether or not that something was evil.

The forest at night was a thing to be wary of, a thing best not to get distracted in. Packed full of snakes, skinny-jawed coyotes, and trees that twisted up like arms from a grave, the forest was not known for its hospitality. It even had its own special brand of particularly large, particularly nasty javelinas--teeth like knives and snouts big as Marine boot heels.

The regional maps called the trees Red Belly Woods, but all the locals knew them as The Fire Eaters. Theirs was one of the first stories Rose ever told me and, though the story itself was unsettling, there was something in it that'd always drawn me closer as well.

As Rose told it:

A long, long time ago, back in the way-way before, there was a night so cold that--whatever tribe of people there were then--had ended up with all their campfires blazing at once. The night was so cold that even the forest's longleaf pines craned in for a bit of that wood-fire warmth. But then the pines grew sick, disgusted with themselves for breathing in the smoke and cinders of their own dead neighbors. So they drew back and decided to put an end to the fires once and for all. Opening themselves up wide--their bodies making a sound like nails ripping up from a coffin, their wood

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cracking and splintering apart--they took one great, communal breath. It was something so big and so numinous that they ended up sucking in not only the fires but the people who'd lit them as well, dragging them all up and direct into the trees' heartwood. And though the people screamed for mercy, the trees only snapped their trunks shut over them, trapping them inside with the fire to cook and burn just like they'd done to the trees.

**THE REGIONAL  
MAPS CALLED  
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THEM AS THE  
FIRE EATERS.**

"And that's how it happened, Viv," Rose said, grinning at me. "And that's why The Fire Eaters have never had a real wildfire—they're already burning from the inside." She nodded, but I remember also that she looked away then, off to someplace in her own mind where I couldn't follow. "It's that burning," she said, nodding again, slower this time. "It's that inner-burning that lends them their power."

The Fire Eaters were crammed full of these kinds of stories.

People said that, if you listened closely enough, the ropes used to hang Tilley Parker's grandparents out there could still be heard creaking

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under their spectral weight. They said that the trees were what had finally turned Shirley Shook's brain crooked, that she'd gone in for a walk one morning and come out crazy that afternoon. They even said that if you went out far enough into the woods at night, you might just catch the sheriff conducting one ritual or another, trying to raise up his dead wife from her grave. The ghost that always spooked me the worst though, was that of Samuel Rines' son, the child the locals had quietly dubbed Rat Boy.

According to the whispers, Samuel's boy had suffered a series of severe asthma attacks back when he was toddler-sized—attacks that were only intensified when he then found himself on the wrong end of a case of rat-bite fever. The legal narrative maintains that the sick little boy just wandered into The Fire Eaters one day and didn't come back--kidnapped, eaten, delirious, or what else, no one knew. But the popular narrative, the one that always got passed around over early morning fishing trips and late night campfires, held that the boy never went missing at all. Rather, he'd been warped by his diseases in some gross, unforgivable way and been changed into something new, something only part-boy and distinctly part-rat as well. Something Samuel had kept locked up in his attic ever since.

And as I buried K out there--the one who'd been our oldest, healthiest, and most promising subject; fetus; girl; our dream of a girl--with the grave-dirt packed under my fingernails and the thin shine of Rat Boy's window leaking distantly through the trees, I wondered if it wasn't the woods at all but us that was burning up inside. Rose would've rolled her eyes at this sentiment, but she also would've understood it just the same. After all, it'd been her idea that we bury the failed ones, not mine.

It really is funny to me now, my being afraid of those woods and all its spooks and specters. Always darting glances over my shoulder and rubbing gooseflesh from my arms—and all the while it was me filling the ground up with ghosts.

Covering K's fairy-sized body over with soft dirt and pine needles, I pressed my hands together and prayed to whatever force was in the trees that, this time, a bit of their magic might touch our work and let us succeed.

Please, I prayed, this time, let us birth a live one.

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# Eruption

by Cameron Watkins

The leaves outside were so fresh and fragrantly green today I wanted to fly into the tree tops and cocoon myself in them. I'd stay in my safe new leafy home for hours and days and years until finally I would emerge a brand new person. No, a Creature. An animate animal-plant...a Plantimal!--that can breath underwater and fly and do everything people and plants can't do on their own, all while converting carbon monoxide into life-giving oxygen. The leaves were raw and vibrant. My apartment was moldy and wet with my upstairs neighbor's leaking water. I was always the same. I needed to leave.

So I did just that. I ventured barefoot through the always-hazardous never-lit staircase of my stale old building to the 6x10 patch of green that played home to a mini-forest right outside the broken front door. I was accompanied by the music of two squealing children, one barking dog, and the out-of-tune voice of our generous neighborhood opera singer echoing off of the deteriorating red bricks. The ripe trees were untouched by all but the wind. They curved toward me. Beckoned me. Swayed.

"We want you." They said, and I heard them.

Possessed by the appealing scent of the bark and the elegant feel of a slight branch against my cheek I began to climb. Scooting up the trunk like a bear in a fever dream I reached solid thick limbs. Climbing, grasping and pulling, extending legs and gripping with toes, I pushed myself up and felt the tree helping me along the way. It creaked and sighed as it grew with the speed of an elevator. I could hear Gene Wilder's voice in my head, "up and out." The tree and I were already out, so there was only up. The tree extended itself with great effort. New branches sprouted and immediately popped out baby leaves which soon became full grown blades, soft and sweet-smelling. Thrilled by our mutual aspiration, we only stopped once

we could no longer see the ground. The top of the tallest building in the city was barely visible. Everything was cloud-licked, still, and quiet. Then the leaves came for me.

Petting me at first, then slowly, gently, wrapping themselves around me. Twining over skin and hair the kind leaves built me a tight, form-fitting home with stems for floors and petioles for pillars. My new quarters were secure and cozy.

Years passed, but I felt none of them. I swayed in the breeze, enjoyed the natural drum of rain on my encasement. I breathed with the tree and moved with the tree and soon I was of the tree. And so the leaves begin to shift, to shuffle, they cracked apart and, with reticence, let me go. Stickily I emerged with elongated limbs made of green gossamer--moss instead of hair, water instead of blood, and tulips for eyes. Toes three times the length of a usual person's and hands that bent and twisted like ocean waves. Miscellaneous herbs and fungi waxed and waned across my torso. Wingspan of an eagle with the coloring of a Blue-spotted Charaxes butterfly, sinuous and strong my body was mine and not mine.

After descending to the city they tried to put me in a zoo but I wouldn't let them. I leapt into the air, zoomed out across the sea and hid in the Amazon with the rainforest birds and poisonous frogs. They tried to study me with electric shocks and scalpels so I laid still in the verdure of Glengesh Pass and hid for a year. Quite relaxing. They wanted me to save them, but my strength is that of a mountain and mountains do not move. I preferred climbing trees and singing to the buds. Stargazing from midair. Communing with fish. I hunt experience and require nothing else. I mark the years now by the fern green of my Spring skin and the cinnabar flare of my Autumn face.

I am the new myth, the Leaf Creature.

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# The Death Of You and Me

by Clay Waters

Walking at a stubborn pace through the gray slush of post-human detritus, Daniel met the dry cracked gulch of the Hudson River by early afternoon. He scrambled into the dry bed and commenced the slow curve toward the old city, weaving among the bleached skeletons of cars, boats, bones animal and human.

Among the ruins he found a rusted but working bicycle. But pedaling the cracked riverbed was too much of a challenge in his state and after a frustrating few minutes he ditched it. It was a hard walk. The burnt-meat smell of the massacres still lingered six years on, which distressingly made his mouth water. When it got too much, Daniel jammed one of the last Slim Jims into his mouth, chewing as slow as he could, savoring every gristly bit.

Three days previous, Alicia, the only other one still in the cabin, had announced her retirement to the cave. Two days later he had followed, carrying a shovel and her bedsheets. This morning he had put on his ball cap, gathered (carefully) his IPOD, the meat sticks, the last of the water, and started down Windham Mountain toward lost Manhattan, now and then grabbing his stomach and wincing. Alicia had begged Daniel to say a prayer on his journey and in the afternoon he did so, reciting from memory a call for peace and justice, conscientiously leaving forgiveness out.

The Shadows had sucked the sky of pollutants, and the stars were sharp enough to scrape his eyeballs when he laid down that first night. He figured they knew he was coming by now, and where he was.

He slept soundly.

As day two burned into his neck, he absently fingered the IPOD, miraculously recharged via Brian, and accidentally unpeeled the square of safety tape; he stopped dead until he'd secured it again. He would have loved to hear Noel Gallagher one more time, but that just wasn't in the cards.

Sometimes he would fall asleep, waking slightly refreshed to find his feet still moving. By early evening he fancied he could see the shadows of the city against the moon, and rested using a tire for a pillow.

Six years ago he and the others (seven skiers plus Sandy's handicapped brother Brian, dragged along due to an inconvenient conflation of family tensions) had woken to the humming sky, the planes embering to the ground as if felled by invisible lightning. Then the pods fell in a black

hailstorm, unfolding metallic six-legged statues that clacked along the roads and sidewalks, up the condos and skyscrapers—natural structures alone seemed to dissuade them—covering every surface like army ants, leaving black tombs behind. Skyscrapers force-fed with people toppled in long accordion notes of elongated human screech, ushering in six years of silence.

Brian had coaxed some last clips from the cabin's sputtering laptop—masses of stricken humanity herded from all parts to the granite, building-swollen island of Manhattan by those tall, whippy legs, which with one touch could render humans into explosive splatter paintings of pink and white. Worse off were the living—shrieking children boated away to fates unknown, parents drowning in the Hudson in crazed pursuit. The Shadows made no noise themselves, so the clips were waking nightmares sound-tracked by human wails.

The Hudson was sucked dry, the scattered human remnants killed, captured or (like most of the ski party) perished though natural deprivations and a wasting that those in the cabin called cancer. As the years passed, the question 'Why have they not come for us?' gave way to the cabin's ever-increasing spaciousness, days of slogging despair, and tiny but fervent hope among the dwindling survivors.

The morning of the third day he saw distant birds, but there were no more birds. He straightened his gait and tried to pick up his pace, to look, if not more of a threat, then slightly less a beaten victim. He patted his hair down; he'd lost his cap.

Now the Shadows clumped on all sides, craning their necks to gander at the upright novelty, the last (?) free human, sometimes mincing, sometimes drafting through the air like tumbleweeds, slowly closing, giving him space but keeping him on the path. Every hundred steps he put his sweaty hand in his pocket to check the gum, thanking the stars for Sandy and her annoying habit. She had donated her last two packs to the cause. RIP.

He reached the old street of Broadway, familiar only by the diagonal shape of the rut and the throng of humanity lining both sides, dozens deep, faces filed down, like knives in a presentation box gagged in wire. Healthy-looking, which surprised and fleetingly, perversely, disturbed him until he remembered slaves had to be fed. He tried to imagine what had ground their personalities away, tried not to hold them in contempt as they formed the bone boundary of his maze, guiding him deeper into the charred rectangle that had once been Central Park.

and no sweet birds sang

He saw it now, hovering soundlessly over the black structure once

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Belvedere Castle. Bigger, with more legs...10...14,15...18? Time and again a Shadow would dock below to receive a “feeding,” puked out in thin black paint-like sheets, a maw craning open, revealing a deep, red interior. There was nothing maternal in the act; Daniel took a meager comfort in the inefficient spluttering. Drones, as Brian had figured. Daniel, so not to blaspheme either mothers or queens, crowned it Floater.

He was being curved over the poisoned ground toward the Central Park reservoir, the old jogging track. The symbol of striving, panting human endurance now ringed an abattoir of dead and rotting humans, judging by the groans from the pit. For his spiritual well-being he kept to the far side, but couldn’t miss the outcropping of the enormous fiberglass blue whale liberated from the nearby Natural History Museum, rotting at a slower but still inevitable pace. Could the Shadows have chanced across anything in that yawning menagerie to identify with, empathize with? An ant colony, perhaps? The thought provided no comfort.

Abruptly a Shadow bore down, a burnt-iron smell enclosing him; two legs encircled him in a perversely gentle patdown. With all his will he refrained from reaching for the IPOD, which could well have ended things then and there. Strange tears sprung to his eyes as he tried to meditate through. He did not fear death then. He feared the search would go on a second longer. Eight arms to hold you eight arms to hold you. Veruca Salt. Working title for the Beatles’ second movie. Help!

Help!

At last it ended and the Shadow whooshed silently away and let him stumble on, sodden with relief.

Only one set of trees remained in the park, whether by caprice or alien intent—a scary grove of American elms, further north. He would not get that far. He was approaching the modest fairy tale castle Belvedere, its slate and stately gray now an unearthly shiny black, directly underneath the Hovering One, its foul leftover drippings splattering on the diseased ground.

He darted underneath and inside.

Nothing confronted him. A piece of broken mirror lay on the floor. Behold the free human. Nutrient-deprived, hair thinning, cuticles and gums blackened. His old nickname had been “Skinny.”

“Come on up to the cupola, Daniel.” Human, chilling in its perverse novelty. The narrow corkscrew staircase was encased in the black shitting. He pressed a damp hand to it and got shivers back.

Upstairs the view was alien but more expected: one white wall dominated by a Shadow-sized, iris-shaped opening, the other three black

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and encrusted with arcane silver symbols. Then he focused on the man in the over-sized suit jacket, standing before a similarly embellished sphere.

"My title is unpronounceable by human vocal cords. Call me Colin." Daniel took the clammy hand of the wizened, white-haired young man.

"Am I the last one?"

"I'm not telling you. So you've come to betray your humanity by giving yourself up and beg for a cure." Somehow it sounded polite.

"Sure." He touched his stomach, gingerly. "It hurts."

"Yes, I'm afraid it will."

"Pardon?"

"Take a look."

Out the window still stood the Theatre in the Round, where famous actors had strutted and fretted not so many summers ago. An audience, identically swathed in loose black robes, silently sat in front of an impressive stage of implements of black and steel whose function could be inferred. It all looked quite efficient. Colin sat down on a chair that resembled a three-legged version of the Shadows, the legs intertwining to form a tortuously curved seat back.

"They're waiting for you, but they know how to wait."

"You're British." Like he'd just realized.

"I worked for a financial firm in Bristol headquartered in New York City. I was up in the city for the day. A takeover, ironically."

"So why did they put you in charge? Liked the cut of your jib?"

A sudden, maniacal laugh, so strong Daniel thought at first he was being mocked. "Oh yes, japes under fire, very American." His smile stopped. "I did inquire if I could simply shoot you but was refused. A rather elaborate production was hinted. And there's no use running, if that's in your head. Why not just chat for a bit?"

Colin's attention returned briefly to the sphere, and Daniel jammed his face against the iris. He saw rings of stacked, overlapping discs. Cells. Tiny, torturous little cells.

Colin pulled him roughly away. "No need to pry. We're well kept."

"By who? The Shadows?" Colin winced. "Why did the Shadows let me in if they don't want me to look?"

"Stop saying that word, please."

"What are you afraid of?"

"Not you, certainly. At the moment all you've got are two packs of gum in your pocket and a no-doubt cancerous lump in your stomach."

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## Used Gravitrons

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"Beaten by whom? OK I'll stop. You're not a bit curious how we lived?"

"You wish to stall by telling your turgid six-year saga?" That smile again. "I don't have to be curious. Everything you've done the last five years is already known, from the eight-man ski-trip starving on the mountain until three mornings ago, when the girl went off to die."

"Alicia."

"Was Alicia, judging from your shovel."

With effort Daniel unfurled his fist. "What do you mean, it's already known? What cancer?"

"See that mold in the corner? Look oddly familiar? It's the same mold in the corner of your cabin, that stuff you scratched and scoured and could never get rid of. A spore that can ride the air and go places otherwise unreachable. It functions like an organic camera and recorder. As for your tum-tum, the scanner here confirms you have a growth in your stomach, which likely accounts for the aches you've been bitching about the last few weeks."

"I have been bitching, haven't I?" Daniel said in a numb monotone, reaching into his pocket.

"As for that explosive device you think you're going to trigger via pop song, you can take your hand out of your pocket. No music player or other human device is going to work in here. Only alien tech." He twitched, as if he'd let slip the wrong word. "Here's something to look at."

Colin turned the machine to show Daniel inside his own abandoned cabin. The resolution was alarmingly good. "Every night you would gather around the table and eat diseased meat and listen to your brain-box Brian's silly ideas about homemade nukes. The response was laughter," his face pinched involuntarily, "if you could call it that. Bombs of straw and scrap metal? No surprise it didn't work. We knew the IPOD trick, and knew that wouldn't work either. "Death of You and Me," eh? I prefer his Oasis days myself."

"Too derivative."

Another smile, this one appalling in its trace of pity. "You do see we had you beaten all along, yes?"

"Silly humans. But why didn't they just come and get us? Afraid of heights?"

Another giggle fit rendered Colin red and helpless. Daniel's instinct to summon help did not recommend itself. When Colin had wiped his eyes he explained, "There may be an aversion to non-right angles. There was also a sense you would come down voluntarily when the other human went off to die. Which happened."

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Daniel reached into his pocket. “My gum. Want the other pack?”

“No thank you.” But Colin kept staring. “I have something better.” He flicked a symbol; a tray slid out the wall. Daniel peered at the contents, a brutally unappetizing mustard shade, thickly threaded with what looked like earthworms. “What is it?”

“The Best We Have.”

Daniel figured the Shadows were on the line. Etiquette compelled Daniel to eat. By the third bite it was clear how much his body needed it and he wolfed the rest without shame, ignoring the spoon until he needed it to scrape the bowl clean, glimpsing Colin’s contemptuous satisfaction every time he lifted his head up to swallow.

“Feeling better? Can’t have you faint and miss the point of the lesson. I’m going to switch this off for a second.” He tweaked a bauble, stared it down before turning back to Daniel.

“They’ll have me shocked half to death, but it’s been a long time since I talked to a free human. Give me that fucking gum.” Without a hint of British reserve Colin emptied the box and chewed open-mouthed, with keening whines of pleasure that would have in another time been mortifying. You know how many days off I’ve had? None. Sleepless maniacs don’t even have days where they’re from.”

“Where would that be?”

“A vigintillion miles away, no doubt,” arching an eyebrow as if to say “benefits of a British education.”

Daniel popped in his own gum and chewed quickly, more duty than pleasure. “So why you, of all humans? A foreigner, no less.”

“I have a knack for compartmentalization, evidently. I have no clue what happened to my wife and son—I both fear and hope they are dead—yet I can still function. Sometimes I do not consider this a strength.”

The impulse to say something sympathetic was hard to resist; the churning in his stomach cut that option off for good. “We will have to leave it there, Colin. We have about a minute left before The Death of You and Me and everything else for about 150 miles.”

“Pardon?” <?> “We knew about the organic surveillance all along. Brian figured it out right off. The spore had bubbles in multiples of six...not four, not eight, but six. And since the Shadows have six legs...you get the gist. He took us on a walk, explained the surveillance, telling us to play dumb in the cabin, then began constructing an elaborate device out of the scavenged tech, while all the while we were talking up failure in the cabin.”

“Brian made a big production of junking the project, but that night he

## **Used Gravitrons**

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took it to a cave a half-mile away. Just wanted to make you think we were a total clusterfuck.” Daniel leaned in. “Which happened, as you might say. And you’re probably right. No human device is going to work in here, only Shadow tech. Well, guess what I’ve got.” He lifted his emaciated stomach, as if Colin could see the bomb nested under the skin.

“Remember our big falling out? Brian needed time in the cave alone. By the time he came back, he had explained to us offsite that all was ready. All it needed was a trigger, something benign like corn syrup, like one might find in, say, chewing gum. The most amazing thing? Even after all the deaths, no one broke character, not even that asshole Mark.”

Sweat bulbed off Colin’s head like a boiled egg, but his voice remained steady. “And what is this surprise? I am on tenterhooks.”

“You sound really British now. It’s a fusion bomb, designed and planted by Brian inside my stomach, based on scraps of scavenged Shadow tech, from the same stuff that blew up Manhattan. It’s been there 18 days and has just been triggered by the chewing gum. As you’ve now figured out, that’s not a cancer in my stomach but a device. But you weren’t looking for a device, because you knew I had a bomb linked to a track on my IPOD and assumed the thing in my stomach was a cancer because I indeed had been bitching for months.” Daniel doubled over. “Ok, that was real. Brian said the success odds were about 95%, and I’d go higher right now.”

“You’re willing to murder every living human? Hardly a victory.”

“That’s not living. Let me ask once more. Am I the last human being alive?”

Colin shut his eyes. “Let my grave hold some secrets.”

“That was rhetorical. The bomb wasn’t Brian’s only brilliant idea. He isn’t dead, and neither is Alicia. That was for the camera too. They’re together, cancer-free, and moving North as fast as they can. He might even get lucky.”

Colin moaned, sprawling backwards in the alien chair.

Blood spurted from Daniel’s nose. “It’s starting,” he said. “One piece left.”

He split it in half, put one to Colin’s mouth. Colin’s lips parted to accept the offering.

“It’s so good,” he rasped.

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# Searching for Laughter

by Ryan Dilbert

The dead hobo's straw hat blew off in the wind and flipped over wildly like a downed spacecraft. Skip and Wayne stood over his rotting corpse, eyeing his clownish make-up and the knapsack on a stick sitting across his chest like an unfinished cross.

"I thought hobos were supposed to be funny."

"This one must be fake," Wayne said before chugging the last of his Bud Light. He crushed the can against his head and tossed the empty into a swaying cluster of reeds.

The longtime friends continued on, half-full cooler in tow, traipsing through the fields over loose barbed wire, on the lips of ditches, searching for laughter. They had both been numb to what others considered funny since they were kids. No amount of watching Tim Allen shows or ventriloquists did anything for them.

Hiking a tiring 2.7 miles away, they plopped their cooler down in front of a chicken coop and sat on the lid. A mess of chickens, packed into the mesh wire cage, started to peck each other's eyes out. The only one who refrained from the fracas had warts around its beak that wobbled like Jell-o. The chicken glared at Skip and Wayne, every once in a while his head jerking forward.

"I haven't laughed at all," Skip said.

"Maybe if they were rubber, it'd be better."

A flurry of feathers bobbed in the air before sticking to the wire. Skip and Wayne left unsatisfied, not sure where they were going. Skip rolled the cooler with one hand and drank a Bud Light with the other. Wayne, overcome with inspiration, ran up behind him and yanked his pants down.

"What?" Skip yelled.

Wayne stared at Skip's hairy, pale ass trying to find the humor in it.

"Sorry. I heard butts were funny."

"Well?" Skip said hopeful.

Wayne examined it more closely, unsure of what to look for.

"Not yours."

When they entered the city limits the sun hung low, a purple-red sliver on the horizon. Their jeans were covered in bits of hay and hungry ticks.

## **Used Gravitrons**

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The cooler grated on the asphalt. Their legs felt like oatmeal. Skip's side burned. How long were they willing to search for this?

"I have an idea," he said as he spotted a hospital.

They sneaked up the fire escape, their cooler a tedious partner, into a room on the second floor. An old black man slept post-brain surgery. The two buddies became his captive audience, waiting for something funny to happen. Skip yanked off a bite of beef jerky from his Slim Jim.

The old man farted. The smell was industrial; a swirl of hot, rotting potatoes and bad weed. It came out a putter at first, but then the fart roared and grumbled.

"This is for sure."

Still chewing, Skip said, "Yeah we have something here."

**THE SMELL WAS  
INDUSTRIAL; A SWIRL  
OF HOT, ROTTING  
POTATOES AND BAD  
WEED.**

He opened the cooler and fished past the mostly melted ice, the beer cans and pulled out a soggy Boston cream pie. After carefully unwrapping the foil from it, he smashed it into the sleeping man's face.

No laughter.

"I thought that would work for sure."

A nurse heard sounds she shouldn't have heard in Mr. Taver's room. She opened the door horrified to see two men staring at her patient like her husband did football on TV. Chocolate icing dripped from Mr. Taver's face. Bits of yellow cake flew out of his nose when he exhaled. She ran into the room in a panic and slipped on a tiny puddle near the cooler. Her right leg flew up from under her like she was kicking at the ceiling and she came crashing down on her back.

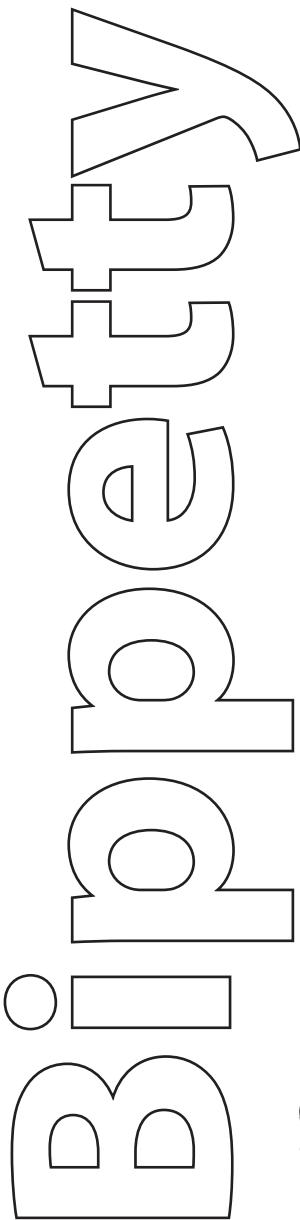
Skip and Wayne laughed. They didn't know why. They only looked at each other, smiling and letting the sound shake them. The feeling warmed them like slipping into bathwater.



“Jawa”  
by Mike Lawrence

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Digitized by  
Digitized by



by Sarah Burgoyne

John woke up late and heart-crutchy to the world. The smell of no-toast tumbled down into his rickety soul. His hip was sore from having slept on a conch all night, but he did not wake up beside the sea. Arrives a time when you awake to find your fuck-storm apartment isn't the semi-circular apse you once thought it was, John thought in the dark and still. It was early. He couldn't hear or see well. Just his bent-fork luck. Bars in Chicago could suck your mind dry of homespun-apron-cherry-pie thoughts for a time—or times—if you're lucky. Don't push it, he said to no one. You make too much demands. He went to the patio and had four five six seven cigarettes. The numb terracotta ash planter mustered dust. A dozen or so smaller birds landed on the trees to shake a few more leaves off. Look at what you've done, they clucked. This begs thought, said John, who turned a heel towards the fridge and the indoors. On the couch, the beer in his glass got smaller and smaller. He knew his bones had seashell-shaped incisions where beds of roses used to be. There was a liturgical element to his "these days" but without the holy bit. The air rang. Oskar groaned over the telephone, and decided not to come over that day—or anymore—having been a radical who's travelled overseas, not some holed-up dump slaggard on a couch with a small beer that's smaller-getting. When John closed his eyes he was in a kindly field, green and ashless, where the song of a large mammal spun itself into the lanks of earthly wind that surrounded his head like a rosy mind-fortress or

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rogue kite. Here, I will be loved. I can feel it just, he thought. The rosebush he neglected returned as a no-longer-yellow vixen and combed her thorns through his shabby hair as forgiveness. This is what I'll be, he thought, from now on, a forgiveness-getter. The world then broke into a smile and ten thousand and one daisies anointed his brand new thought. It wasn't any more interesting than that. He slouched off the tent of his reverie which was starting to leak and moved towards the weeping fridge to get another drink to quickly disappear. Took to the bathroom and saw the lard-tangle of his left hair. It always ends like this, he thought, putting down the beer and dumping baby powder into his mop. You can smell the baby but the baby might never be there. A fine coating of powder had landed on his shoulders that were manly but not as manly under his dark pullover. He felt like pudding. A single battered deep-fried chip shop black pudding, sliced open. Maybe he would move. Maybe he would become a hieromonk or a hegumen or an archangel. But first, he would caulk the counter where the dish rack had been and the water dribbled through. These are the only rehearsable mysteries. There are worse men, he thought at his reflection, and made his way back to the kitchen through a forest of bottles. In his mind, his home was cat-less because no cat ever trusted him. Who's to say it'd be any different. The honey of his summers had melted years ago, leaving the comb. No prospects for the future. For friends, maybe a few mindless votes. For family, a failed meeting of the minds.

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“Mary Poppins”  
by Mike Lawrence



“Mr. Freeze”  
by Mike Lawrence

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“Orc Dave”  
by Mike Lawrence



“Poison Ivy”  
by Mike Lawrence

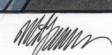


“Gandalf”  
by Mike Lawrence

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“Yoda”  
by Mike Lawrence



“Wonder Woman”  
by Mike Lawrence

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# Daughter of God

By Shannon R. Reeves

The air is hot and heavy in the cabin. The fans above our heads do little to ward off the heat. Father says hell is hotter and that this heat is to remind us of our future if we don't follow God's will. The small room is packed with people I have known all my life. The old and most faithful sit in foldout chairs in the front row. The other children and I stand along the walls, waiting for the service to start. My parents, whom I am told to call Mike and Ann, sit in the middle of the room. I am grateful they don't sit in the back where those are most in need of cleansing sit. My parents are faithful to Father and soon they will sit front row; I'm sure of it.

"Good evening my children," Father's voice booms from the front of the room. All eyes are drawn to him. Although I am only twelve years old, I know Father Daniel is a handsome man. He is younger than most of our members, but as he stands at the podium in his white suit, and his blond hair combed back, you can't help but feel the power flowing out of him. I stand against the wall flattening my knee length dress. My brown hair is pulled back into a braid that hurts my head but when Father speaks, everything else vanishes.

"Breath in this heat my children," Father says. "Let it wash over you, let it seep into your pores and your hearts. Let it remind you of the hell that is waiting for the sinners. Are you sinners?"

"No," we respond in unison.

"Are you bound for hell?"

"No."

"And why is that?"

"Because we love God. Because we love Father Daniel."

"Amen," Father says. "Now, as always I will ask the young children to come forward and receive their blessings."

This is how service is done. We all meet together, Father blesses the young and we are sent to the basement for our own service. In a few days when I turn thirteen, I will be allowed to stay for the full service. I cannot wait for that day. I cannot wait to be seen as a grown woman in Daniel's eyes. I cannot wait to be a part of the sacrifice.

## **Used Gravitrons**

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As I walk up to receive my blessing, I hear Ann whisper for Mike.

"I don't feel well," she says. "I need to leave."

Before I reach the alter, I see her creep through the cabin doors.

We file down the stairs to the basement, led by Brother Jones and Sister Amy. There are two small rooms in the basement, one for girls and one for boys. I follow Sister Amy and the other girls into our room. There are no chairs or tables in the room, so we sit on the floor in a small circle. The walls are bare except for a portrait of Father smiling down on us,

"Now, who remembers where we left off?" Sister Amy asks. Hands fly into the air to answer the question. She points to the girl next to me, Cecelia.

"We were talking about the role of a wife," Cecelia says. "How we are to listen to our husband's commands, because his law is Father's law."

"Very good," Sister Amy says. "We are here to please our husbands. That is how we escape the fires of hell. We must also be desirable to our husbands. It is their reward from God to have beautiful wives to look at and enjoy. For what is the use of a woman who is not good to look at?"

Sister Amy continues to talk of the importance of appearance. It's hard sometimes to keep the lessons straight. We are to be beautiful, but not in a sinful way. She tells us that women outside of our compound are sluts and whores, and that we do not want to be like those women. As Sister Amy shows us how to line our eyes, there is the usual scream from upstairs. A new sinner has been offered to our God. I smile, knowing that our family is purer than before.

"Girls," Sister Amy says, "let's take a moment to discuss our Family's purpose. Can anyone tell me what we do to sinners?"

"Sacrifice them to God," a few voices say in unison.

"Yes," Sister Amy says, "but why?"

There is silence in the room as we search our brains for the answer. I slowly raise my hand into the air.

"Because..." I begin unsure of myself. "Because God hates sinners. And in order to show God that we hate sinners too, we must get rid of them."

"Very good Chrissie," Sister Amy says. "But why can't we just ban them from our compound? Why must we spill their blood?"

"Because Jesus shed his blood for us, so we shed blood for him," I say. Sister Amy smiles at me and nods.

Before Sister Amy can say more, Father Daniel walks in. Sister Amy walks up and kisses his cheek in the customary fashion. He scans the room,

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looking each girl up and down before his eyes settle on me.

“Well, you all look stunning,” he says, “you are all on your way to becoming beautiful women. Sister Amy, I need Chrissie for a moment. I want to prepare her for joining our community as a woman instead of a girl.”

My heart flutters as my name flows from Father’s lips. We have never spoken in private, I didn’t even think Father noticed me among all his followers.

“Chrissie,” Amy beckons me forward. I can feel the blood rise in my face and try not to look Father in the eye as he extends his hand to me. He leads me through the basement door and out into the summer night.

“If I remember correctly,” Father says, “your birthday is coming up and soon you will join the Family as a grown woman.”

“Yes Father.”

“I have no doubt that you will make an excellent addition to our Family. But you must remember Chrissie, that not all our members are as devout as you.”

He kneels down to be eye level with me. My head is swirling with questions but my nerves hold me back from voicing them.

“I want you to be my eyes and ears Chrissie,” he says. “If you see or hear anything that goes against our mission, come to me. Anyone could be a Judas in our mists, even your closest friends...or family. Do you understand?”

I nod. Father puts his hands on my shoulders and I feel a shiver run down my spine. A man has never touched me before, not even Mike.

“When the time is right, you are going to make a wonderful bride,” he says. His hands move from my shoulders to my chest where my breasts are just beginning to grow. He lets them rest there for a moment before caressing my stomach and my waist. When he takes his hands away and stands up, I feel like I might pass out from the emotion running through me. He takes my hand, and leads me back to the girl’s basement room.

That night, I find it hard to sleep. Father’s touch fills me with a desire that feels sinful. As I imagine Father touching me again and slid my hands between my legs to touch myself. I don’t understand how such a good feeling can be sinful. Can God be wrong sometimes? If God is wrong, does that mean Father can be wrong too? This thought scares me and I pull my hands back up above the blankets.

I can hear my parents talking in the next room. Ann’s voice sounds strained but I can’t make out the words. I crawl out of bed and tip toe to my

## Used Gravitrons

door, creaking it open just enough to see the living room.

“Don’t you see what he really is, Mike?” Ann says. “Can’t you see what kind of life this is for our daughter?”

“It is the life that God wants,” Mike says.

“How can you be so fucking blind,” Ann says. I’ve never heard Ann swear before. Women aren’t suppose to use those words, those words are only for men to use.

“He is brainwashing them. He has complete control. For fucks sake, look what he did to Lucy!” Ann says.

“She was a sinner, she was bound for the fires of hell and if we hadn’t rid ourselves of her, then we would all be doomed.”

“I’m going to leave. I’m going to take Chrissie and run,” Ann says.

“Remember why you joined Daniel in the first place Ann,” he says, “didn’t you want a good life for our daughter?”

“She’s not even your daughter!” Ann yells, “I was fifteen and scared. I didn’t know what I was doing. I can’t sit by and watch my little girl be manipulated and abused by this psychopath.”

I can see Mike stand in front of Ann now. He slaps her hard in the face and she falls to the ground.

“You are going to end up like Lucy if you talk like that,” he says. “I’ve put up with your doubts for

weeks now. It’s over. Go to our room and pray. I will be up in a moment and I expect you to be ready to serve me as a good wife should.”

Ann gets up and when she turns to leave, I can see the hand print left on her face. I hurry back to bed before they notice me. From my bed, I can hear Ann opening drawers and tossing things around in the room next to mine. Soon, Mike is in there and I can hear them arguing again.

The next morning, we go to service together as always. Morning service is fast and doesn’t require the children to leave. Father tells us how we are blessed and how we must keep the compound running. It’s hard to concentrate on Father this morning. Ann has barely said a word since we

**“WE  
HAVE NO  
MOTHER,”  
I SAY.  
“ONLY GOD,  
AND OUR  
FATHER  
DANIEL.”**

left the house. I know I should tell Father about the fight and what Ann said but I'm scared of what will happen to her.

"Before we go on with our day, I want you all to remember something," Father says. His eyes rest on me as he delivers his message.

"God wants this community to grow," he says. "Like a garden, we can't grow if we have weeds. Let's pull out the weeds together."

His eyes bore into me and I'm sure he can tell I'm holding a secret. I know the right thing to do now. I know what is best for God and our family.

Afterwards, I stay behind while everyone goes out to begin their work. Father is still standing at the podium talking to a few of the adults. I stand silent and wait for my turn. My eyes are drawn to a dark red stain on the floor. The wood is always dry by the morning but the color stays to remind us of the sinners.

"Did you have something you wanted to discuss?" he asks.

There is a lump in my throat and it's hard to get the words out when he's looking at me with his striking blue eyes. He smiles, and I feel like I can tell him anything.

"I heard Mike and Ann arguing last night," I say. "Ann said...she said she wanted to leave and take me with her."

"Do you want to leave?" he asks.

"No!" I protest.

"Good," he said. "Are you ready for your first adult service Chrissie?"

"But, my birthday is still a few days away," I say.

"I think you are ready," he says.

That night, I wear my best dress and do my hair like Sister Amy has taught me. We enter the chapel and I sit with Mike and Ann instead of standing. Father Daniel does the children's blessing and excuses them to the basement.

"Now," he says, "we have a special young lady who is to become a woman tonight. Chrissie, come up here dear."

I feel everyone's eyes on me as I walk towards Father. I'm braver when I see him smiling down at me. As I turn to face the room, I notice two men blocking the door. I wondered if they always did that for adult services.

"Chrissie has been a big help in keeping our community pure from evil," Father says. "She has told me of a betrayer in our midst."

My eyes dart to Ann. She stares at me with unbelieving eyes that are close to tears but I know her heart is not with God. Mike has been watching Father with no emotion. The two men who had been by the door

## **Used Gravitrons**

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now approach Ann. They grab her and although she struggles, they are stronger than her.

They bring her to the alter that stands behind us and strap her arms and legs down. She is crying now.

“Chrissie, sweetie, why?” she asked.

“Because I love our Family and I love Daniel, Ann” I say. I feel Daniel slip the knife in my hands. We must rid ourselves of sinners and offer God blood as his son did for us. Nothing has been so clear in my mind.

“Remember Chrissie,” he whispers to me, “women are weak and the devil is strong. Get the devil out of our house.”

I approach the alter and Ann begins to wither at her restraints.

“I’m your mother,” she pleads.

“We have no mother,” I say. “Only God, and our Father Daniel.”

I stab the knife into her stomach as hard as I can. The blood immediately begins to drench the wooded floor but I stab her again. She screams but the noise doesn’t stop me. I go on until she lay motionless on the table. My blue dress had turned red and I begin to cry.

“Why are you crying child?” Daniel asks me.

“She ruined my dress,” I say.



“Power Girl”  
by Mike Lawrence

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Red Egg

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# SIX-PACK

by Shawn Patrick Murphy

# STORY

### BEER 1

It's amazing how a vagina can turn out to be a dick. But if they can kiss who really cares. I've seen a man pee himself and keep on dancing. I've shit my pants at port authority. You can teach a monkey to dance. But you cant teach her to sing. They were both clowns but they were in love. They fought a lot but who doesn't. But they were truly clowns. Not fops or Juggalos but real clowns. They leased a zip car and drove to Vermont. Vermont is famous for maple syrup and Ben and Jerry's. Not for clowns. But they did it anyway. They watched too many movies. They came in blazing looking for candy. And by candy mean candy. The fact that nothing matters is awesome.

### BEER 2

Amazing is the new black. they killed two people but they were drunk. 20 weiner dogs. Weiner dogs are so smart. weiner dogs cant climb stairs. except my weiner dog Miles, he could climb stairs but he had one of those elevators for old people. but it was an elevator for weiner dogs. he has such a bitch. he went up the stairs and took a dump on my bed. thats what he used the elevator for. to take dump on my bed. and the bed was 2 feet off the ground. miles needed an elevator to climb the stairs but didn't need one to get on top of my bed and take a 3 coil dump on my bed. asshole.

### BEER 3

Wrapped in foil, at a spaztic boil, I am what i used to be plus the plastic that people think was made from oil. Why not, smoke pot , take all your your clothes & tie em in a knot. FUCK the plot. it dropped 17 minutes ago when u thought that a rap was the last piece that anyone wanted to read about terrible people doing mediocre things to menial men. I'll tell that all i want is to finish shit n press send.

**BEER 4+5**

my cousin and i did acid together and we talked about being molested. Three weiner dogs got so angry Its a lll about Bill Cosby. The clowns alWys win.

**BEER 6**

what is the magazine and what is the idea? Because you dont shave to be the craziest. I must be the laziest. But they were clowns thaths the whole idea. Cutting up bodies like birthday balloons. Its all they really knew. One day we are looking back on this and we are laughing. Every hundred years everyone is dead and all we have is pictures. Pictures of clowns laughing at our birthday partys and nothing ever matterd. no one ever knew.

Used Gravitrons

# THE

END

# CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

**Mike Lawrence** grew up wanting to be a superhero and an artist. He never developed any super powers, but he did become an artist after being exposed to gamma radiation while attending art school at the University of Oregon. Mike lives in Portland, OR with his wife and their two muddy boys Hank and Gus. [www.mlawrenceillustration.com](http://www.mlawrenceillustration.com)

**Jahla Seppanen** was born and raised off the grid in Madrid, New Mexico. She received her BA in Writing and Fine Arts from Sarah Lawrence College in New York. Over the past year, she completed her first novel. Jahla enjoys Bonnie and Clyde, mint gum, and Puerto Rican rum. Her stories have been accepted to Fourteen Hills, The Bookends Review, Niche, and Turk's Head Review.

**Mark T. Gerlach** is a journalist and short story fiction writer. His fiction has appeared in various literary journals, including Underground Voices. He currently works as a reporter for a technology website and magazine. Gerlach is a native of the Hudson Valley region in New York, and now resides in the Greenpoint neighborhood of Brooklyn. He has a B.A. in English from SUNY New Paltz.

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**Shannon Reeves** is a fiction writer born in New York and raised in North Carolina. She is a creative writing student at the University of North Carolina Wilmington where, if all goes according to plan, she will get her BFA and a fenced in yard for her dog.

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