



Funwater
Awesome

**THROW OFF YOUR
WORK GLOVES!**

RIP OFF YOUR PANTS!

STAND UP AND

DANCE A BARE

NAKED, ASS HAPPY

DANCE!

IT'S TIME FOR...

**FUNWATER
AWESOME!**

Hello Hello!

Welcome to the first issue of Funwater Awesome, the works and rambles of writer/dishwasher/lover Zach Mandeville. That is me. I am Zach Mandeville. The one writing this letter.

Hello.

There's two stories in this issue-kind of the bulk of the thing-and then a whole bunch of little personal asides telling you more about me and the town of Funwater, Washington-- fast facts and funny anecdotes and what have you. Funwater Awesome is your uncle at some party, who grabs you by the arm as you're going to get more soda, and just has to tell you something. This uncle, this zine, sometimes has an interesting story to tell, but a lot of times it's just that he bought new cereal and it really hurts his jaw.

It's like that.

I hope you guys enjoy it. If the stories are bad, then hopefully I charm you with the strength of my personality and the niceness of my town. And if both are good, then that's five dollars you just spent well. And if both are bad, well shoot.

The photos in this issue (including the cover photo) were done by the wonderful Lindsey Carr, who is quite talented and who I love immensely. Half of this zine really is her creation, but I'm selfish and took all the glory.

In the back of this book you'll notice a caramel apple sucker. It's yours to keep, a thank you for buying my zine. So even if you completely hate it (and i hope you don't) at least you get a lollipop.

HOW TO GET TO FUNWATER, WASHINGTON

If your coming from the Museum of Science and
Industry, Chicago

Go east onto East Museum Drive miles toward S. Everett ave
Get onto S Everett Avenue then turn right onto east 57th St.

Travel that 4 miles to S Lake Shore Dr/US-41 N

Merge onto I-55 S

Take the I-90 W/I-94 W exit(exit 292) toward Wisonsin.

Drive a thousand miles

Merge onto I-90

Merge onto I-90 East via the exit on the left, towards Billings.

Travel eight hundred miles.

Take the WA-18 W exit(it's exit 25) toward Tacoma

Turn left onto WA-18

Merge onto I-5 toward Tacoma

go 38 miles

Take the 2nd Ave exit(exit 103)

Turn left onto Custer way

Go past two streetlights

Turn right onto Cleveland

Go past the graveyard

Turn left onto Ensley

Travel down to the 5th house on the right, 613 Ensley Lane.

Knock. I should be there. We'll go and get a soda or a coffee
or something. I don't know. I haven't planned anything yet.

We'll find something.



Dedication

There is a smell that exists here in Funwater, at the point of Henderson Boulevard where it sinks into valley, at the intersection of the just built Briggs YMCA and the just demolished Briggs Nursery and the empty lot that'll one day be the Briggs Subdivision-all named for a man we know nothing of, except on his death he became a neighborhood. It's a patch of stink I hit each morning as I bike to work, as soon as I turn right at the light and bike past the abandoned peeled white grange. A heavy cloud that smells just like ass.

And each time I bike through it I think, Oh god, is that me?

And that, I guess, is the best introduction to me, your intrepid author and friend. That latter thought is my life summed up. On my epitaph it will read:

Zach Mandeville

Always afraid he smelled like ass

It began to drive me crazy-this assy pants fear each time I biked to work. I'd wash my pants the night before-put extra fabric softener with them in the dryer, spray them down with febreze that morning-get on my bike, hit that turn and mutter,

“Oh, c’mon!”, because I smelled already. I thought the sweat of my backside was collecting and festering so quickly, that I was so out of shape, overweight, and embarrassing, that it took only a half mile bike ride to make me stink.

Jeez Louise, Zach, I’d think, you really gotta start running or something. Because this is pathetic.

Then one morning I realized that the smell could be something besides me, something on that stretch of Henderson Blvd. So I looked around and, sure enough, right behind the grange stood a big group of daisies, waving proudly their stinky blossoms in the morning wind.

That’ll be the second line of my epitaph:
Didn’t notice things quickly.

In ancient Celtic belief daisies represented the spirits of dead children. God placed them on earth thinking the beautiful flower would help the poor parents grieve. Chaucer gave the flower its name—seeing that they closed their blossoms at night he called them “Day’s Eye” and this name, slightly modified, stuck. Wordsworth and Shakespeare wrote poems about them, Goethe writes about them in Faust. Painters fill fields with them, little girls turn them into bracelets and crowns. For hundreds of years they’ve been a symble for pure, simple, innocent beauty.

And still they smell so freaking bad.
There’s probably something in that, I think.

Tumwater used to be something. It used to have a big, impressive brewery making fine Olympia beer. And it used to have an actual downtown, with small shops and restaurants

and pretty houses. It used to be manufacturing capital, making flour and timber and electricity in all the factories lining the Deschutes River.

But the depression came and the factories closed down. And the 50's came and the freeway was put right through the middle of Tumwater, destroying ninety stores and houses and erasing the downtown. In the mid-90's, the brewery was bought out by Miller, who stayed there for a couple of years then closed it down. Now it sits useless, decaying, and fenced off.

Tumwater, in the right light, looks like a craphole. It's parking lots and department stores and endless blocks of strip mall. And no matter where you are, the freeway is right beside you, rushing, roaring, and whirring like an ugly asphalt ocean.

But this town used to be something, and that history and glory is still evident among all the big blocks of warehouse stores. It still surprises you with its random bits of beauty: charms and wonders popping up unexpectedly in patches across the town. If you're open to it, you'll find them.

A couple nights ago, Lindsey and I went to see a Bloodhag concert at the Tumwater Library. Bloodhag plays heavy metal songs about science fiction authors. They set up in the middle of the library, dressed up in shirts and ties, and screamed about Isaac Asimov while the librarians-giddy at the crazy music and happy just to have so many kids in the library-ran around and refilled their water glasses. During the song "Kurt Vonnegut" Lindsey nudged me and pointed to a high schooler in the back of the audience. He was chubby and awkwardly tall, with a pomf of bushy black hair and thick tortleshell glasses, and

he was standing there, eyes closed, passionately playing air guitar to the music. He was so into it, red-faced and sweating, strumming a nothing guitar against his wet t-shirt. I saw him and thought, , I want to devote my life to you!

At school he was probably quiet, dorky, and awkward, huddled in the corners of classrooms with thick books on quasars hidden in his backpack. But here, with his favorite band playing at his library, he was alive.

I renamed the daisies, called them ass flowers--it seems more descriptive. It didn't phase them. They are not ashamed of their smell, nor are they beautiful in spite of it. Each sunrise they'll open their blossoms and lengthen and wave in the wind, completely happy, smelly and fine. They are smelly and pretty in the same bunch of petals and the daisy, the ass flower, is just fine with that.

Funwater Awesome is dedicated to all ass flowers.



1.

Every morning is the same for me. Wake up at the same too late time and take the same too long shower. Eat my cereal with slight discomfort cos I always sleep with my mouth open and in the morning my throat is sore and easily scratched by bran. I grab my bag with too many books, pop in my headphones, get blessed by my mom, and go outside.

And outside is the same. Raise my bike seat up because it always slides down when I ride it, check the air in the tires and then bike to work.

It's hard to appreciate your surroundings when you're groggy and late for a dishwashing job. When they're all whizzing by, you don't really notice the trees. And when the landscape is all spread out in front of you, when the road lets into forest and back into city and your eye has to take it all in at one eyelink, it becomes nothing but scenery-- bits and patches of color and shapes, background props, no better than well-painted cardboard.

Sometimes I take a different route, and end up at the same scenery from different angles. I come home from Lacey instead of up from Olympia and then I notice all the beautiful, dramatic hills surrounding these towns. And it really is something.

Yesterday, on the way to work, a fox dashed out of "The Barn" subdivision and ran across the street in front of my bike.

It was breathstopping to see. I didn't even know foxes lived here.

Come spring time all the cherry trees along the cemetery will bloom up bright pink and wonderful, and for two or three weeks the walk to the bus will be colorful and great. And come autumn all the leaves will change and my whole block will be bright and fiery with dying scenery until winter comes and rains it all away. Those are the bright shows, when the wilderness peeking around all the city streets shocks us with its prettiness.

Until then though, it's all the same, every day biking past the same ass flowers, neighborhoods, pine forests, and power lines.

It's kinda like when my friend told me about her boyfriend, saying he was, "alright I guess."

I laughed at that, "Just alright?" I asked.

"Well you know how when you wake up and see the same white wall every morning? Every single day that wall is the first thing you see? And one morning you wake up, And you just really want to paint it?" Then she blushed.

It's like that.

On Sundays I go to Quaker meeting, and sit with all the other Friends in expectant silence. And each meeting during my silent prayer I stare out through front door window: a small square of sky, tree leaves, and phone lines arranged artfully above the exit sign.

No matter the weather, that small patch will always be beautiful. When it's overcast, the white sky contrasts sharply with the black lines, the purple of the tree leaves stretching across the window mellows them both, and it all is warm and

peaceful. When the weather turns sunny the sky turns bright blue, the tree leaves shine bright jubilant orange, the power lines become exclamations points. Sometimes clouds drift into the window as welcome visitors, and birds fly by sometimes too, but those three elements stay the same- the lines unmoving like well placed brush strokes, that whole window framing nature and electricity as artistic, inspiring, divine, and purposeful.

And maybe that's the thing guys. To not try to take it all in at once, cos that's overwhelming. In the big open view, your sidewalks and scenery are just necessary backgrounds, your town is just some old small town, your life is just some mundane old small life, and everything blends into vanilla pudding. But examine it piece by piece. Study each bark of the tree broken up by windowpanes as individual paintings. Ride endlessly around your block like a ten year old until every house, carport, sidewalk crack and driveway weed is named, marveled at and appreciated. Then you'll find the small, fantastic things.

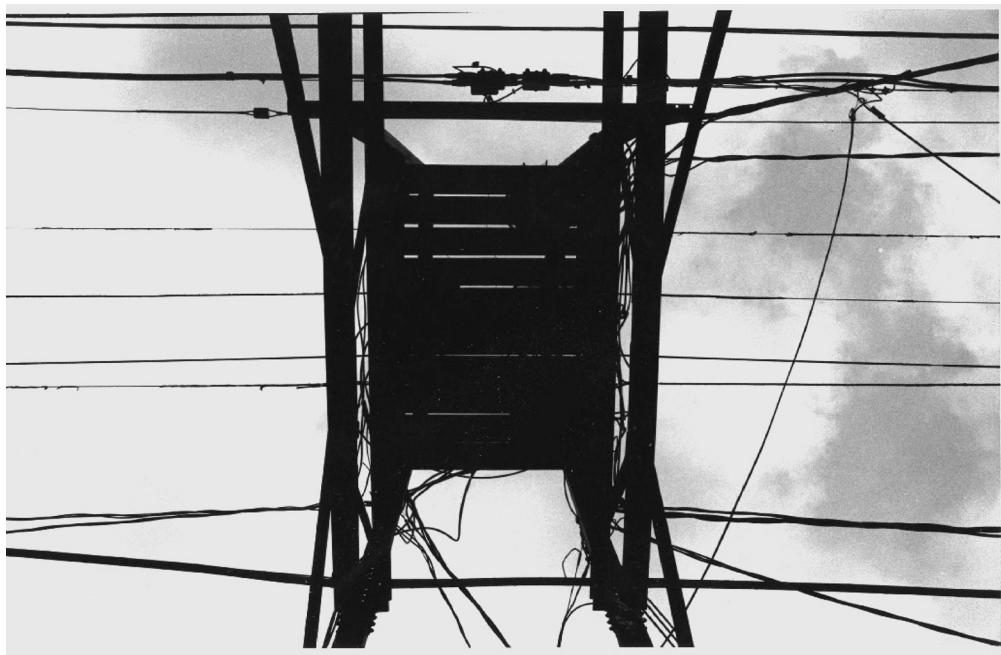
It's when you catch a jogger jogging in perfect time to the music in your headphones. Or the warmblanket happiness of the cabin after your plane lands and almost all the passengers are chewing gum. It's getting bulk candy when it's soft and fresh and entire gallons of Tampico fake fruit juice drunk in one sitting. It's confused fat emo kids mopping floors at taco bell, tinny guitars coming out of the headphones around their shoulder, looking at old photos of your grandparents when they were newlyweds, standing in front of their car, their goofy young love showing through the brown and white cracks of the photograph. Ants carrying bread chunks, kids throwing embarrassing tantrums, scotch tape.

and on on and on and on.

This is a zine about the town of Funwater, WA. Its people, its smells, its restaurants, distractions, and terrible parades. All further issues will be about the same.

I feel like I should tell you all about my town, about it's founders and its culture and local funtime events. But I've tried writing that and I didn't know where to start and got frustrated. It'd probably just be dry and boring anyway and you'd put the whole zine down and say out loud, "Zach Mandeville? Screw him!"

So instead I'll just assure you that Funwater is a good town, and a great place to stay, and you should read the following little stories to get to know it better. All stuff contained herein are about Funwater, its history and highlights and coming attractions. Each picture, prose, and poem divides the town into manageable pieces, like the sky through a window, cut up by powerlines.





Crazy Enough

Addison Ferguson was looking for a specific tree, a tall evergreen with a moderate amount of branches, straight trunk, no rot. He tried each tree in his backyard and now was prowling the neighborhood, ignoring the old oak with its branches mangled around telephone wires, or the young trees like broomsticks spaced along the sidewalk. He spotted a healthy looking tree in his neighbor's front yard, its base surrounded by primroses. He walked up to it, knocked on the trunk and asked, "Eveline, are you there?"

§

Eveline was weeding the side yard first time Addison met her. It was the summer before fifth grade. He was riding his bike around the cul-de-sac and she was the new girl, with

a moving truck still in the driveway, stooped over dandelions with a spade. He rode in circles, each lap moving closer to her house, trying to get her attention. He was entranced with her red hair flaming in the sunlight, the sweat running down her freckled arms, the flip flops dangling off her feet. Maybe I could just bike over there and see if she wants a tour of the neighborhood, He thought.

As he rode past her again he glanced through her house's side window. Her parents were inside painting one of the rooms. Her dad had a beard and looked like a mountain man.

Addison biked back to his house on the other side of the street. He would show her around tomorrow. While he was taking off his helmet she turned around, saw him, and waved. Addison blushed and waved quickly, then ran into his house.

§

The tree in the neighbor's yard gave no reply. Addison lifted the collar of his jacket and trudged on against the wind, along the houses, knocking on evergreens.

§

"What are you wearing? Are you wearing a bolo tie?" Addison asked.

"Shut up!" Eveline said, "Yes, I was wearing a bolo tie. I was a Texas oil tycoon when I was young." She quickly turned the page.

They were looking through her photo album on their

sofa after dinner. He laughed accidentally at her 2nd grade school photo, when she still had glasses and a mullet.

"If you keep laughing I won't show you anymore!" she said.

"I'm sorry", he said and turned the page, "You really were beautiful."

"I was eight."

"Well you can tell you're going to grow up to be beautiful."

Eveline kissed his neck, "I love you," she said and took away the book.

§

In 12th grade Addison wrote an article for the paper about her, a Student of the Week feature done every issue. He had never talked to her the eight years she'd lived here. He never gave her the tour of the neighborhood.

She came up to him before chemistry, as he was dating and titling his notes, and sat on the corner of his desk.

"That was a really nice article." She said, "very sweet."

She was probably thinking about where he wrote: *In a school full of cardboard cut-outs, she is truly unique. A wonderful, one of a kind person...all students should get to know her, their lives truly would be touched.*

"Um, well, yeah" he said and looked down, "It was all true. And stuff."

"I just wanted to say thanks." She said. Addison looked up. She was sitting on his desk wearing a very short skirt and he could see her legs and they looked so smooth and now he

was blushing. He pushed up his glasses and shrugged quickly, “No problem.”

She hopped off his desk and walked back to her seat. Addison watched her go and, as he rested his head on his hand, was surprised to find that even the back of his ears were sweating.

§

He called out her name to every tree in the neighborhood. He had called out her name to every maple and oak in the cemetery, barely holding back tears. He had whispered it to the saplings in the parking lot when he went to Safeway this morning. Addison walked back to their house, head down, and then started up the car. At each tree he passed as he drove towards his old high school, Addison judged it, looked at its length, width, color, and branches. None seemed right.

§

“You keep me crazy enough. Whenever I’m too stressed or too serious, you’re always there to lighten things up. You show me how much life there is to be living. That’s what I like best about you.” Addison told her as they walked around the Bon Marché.

“Thank you, Adly,” she told him, “But I don’t know if they’ll accept that in the interview.” She held up a black blouse, “Does this look professional?”

“Too shiny,” he told her, “Well, then tell them about your

fantastic ass. I know I'd hire you for that alone."

Eveline laughed, "What about this?" she asked, holding up a light blue sweater.

"Try it on," he said.

They walked to the dressing room. Addison put his arm around her, "You're gonna do great tomorrow. You're going to look great and they're going to hire you and you'll be happy and working at a great museum. Spend all day looking at old photographs, handling old memorabilia"

"Well, we'll see," she said

"You're perfect for that job. They have to hire you!" he said.

"You're crazy," she said.

§

For the past two weeks, Addison would eat a bowl of oatmeal in the morning and nothing else. He couldn't seem to keep much else down.

This morning he ate nothing at all. Woke up, put on his jacket with eyes unfocused as if clouded by a vision, and went outside.

"Eveline!" he called out to the apple tree they had carved their names into three years ago. He got no reply. Undeterred, he moved on.

§

"We need to get this! It'll bring good luck to our house."

Eveline pointed to a giant stone turtle.

“A turtle?” They were shopping at the local nursery.

“Look at how cute it is, eyes closed and stretching its neck.”

Addison looked. There was a faint sense of something endearing about it.

“So the first thing we buy for our house is a stone turtle.”

“Never mind. Not for 75 dollars we don’t.” Eveline said, holding up the price tag.

“We should probably buy a sofa or a table first.” Addison said.

“Should we try Goodwill?”

“Goodwill it is.”

§

First thing they did in Addison’s official, very own clinic was dance. She made him do it.

“You’re crazy.” He said.

“You have your own clinic, Adly!” she said, “You are a fancy, clinic-owning optometrist! That doesn’t make you want to dance?”

He laughed, “I look like such a retard when I dance.”

“You look like a happy five year old. I love your happy five year old dance.”

They danced in the middle of the office, among the boxes of trial frames and eye charts. Afterwards they ate dinner, a picnic she packed him, on a blanket spread across the unfurnished waiting room.

“This is such a great location.” She told him, “there’s a Dairy Queen right across the street.”

“I’ll get fat off their burgers.” He said, “I’ll have to watch that temptation.”

“How about every Wednesday I’ll bring you a blizzard during your lunch break? I have long lunch that day, so I could come and eat with you and still get back to work on time.”

“That sounds great.” He said.

§

Addison passed their old high school and was punched with nostalgia. He remembered riding the bus with Eveline, sneaking glances at her while she worked on chemistry homework. The most he ever talked to her was when she thanked him for the newspaper article.

If he had only talked to her in High school, didn’t wait until college to ask her out. If he had only offered to show her around the neighborhood back in fifth grade, then he could have known her sooner. Fallen in love sooner. They could have been together longer. He made a right at the next street and drove towards the Black Hills.

He was fitting frames on a 10-year-old when he heard the screech, the thump, and the shouting. Outside the window, he could see a crowd gathered at the crosswalk connecting Dairy Queen and the medical plaza. Addison turned white as a bone. It was Wednesday. He ran outside, shaking.

“What happened? What Happened?” He yelled.

He looked to his right and saw a pickup truck crashed

through a telephone pole. He pushed through the crowd hoping and praying it wasn't her, but already, painfully, knew that it was.

§

"When did you know you loved me?" Addison asked over ice cream.

"It was at Eagan's, when we stopped for lunch before going to my sister's. I was watching you eat tater tots and you looked so peaceful just dipping it into ketchup and I remember thinking, I could spend my life with this man."

She dug deep into the pint and offered Addison a large spoonful. He leaned forward and took it.

"When did you know?" she asked.

"Fifth Grade. I saw you weeding and knew you were the one for me," he said.

"You're just being romantic," she said.

"You know why I love you, Eveline?" Addison asked, taking another spoonful.

"Why's that?"

"Because you always give me the largest chunks in the ice cream."

"You need them for your bones," she said

"That makes no sense," He said.

Eveline laughed and snuggled into him tightly, then grabbed the remote, "Okay, hush. Our show's back on," she said and un -muted the TV.

§

Addison parked as close as he could to the hills. He'd have to walk a mile and a half through pasture to reach them. He put his hands snug into his pockets and started walking towards the hills, focused intensely on the patches of forest spread across them.

§

"Well hello!" Eveline said, waving at Addison over his book, "What are you doing here?"

"Going to college," he said, smiling. She stood in front of him, wearing a sundress and flip-flops. The summer had made her even more attractive, turned her hair brighter, defined each freckle, made her eyes seem a lighter blue.

"It's a fancy seeing you here." Eveline sat in the study kiosk next to him, "What are you studying?"

"Organic Chemistry." He said, and put his book down, "I'm pre-med. What about you?"

"I'm pre-grocery store." She said, "I'm studying folklore."

Addison was fascinated. "What kind of job can you get with that?"

"Like I said, grocery store."

He laughed. She smiled at him.

"Yeah." Addison fumbled for small talk., "College can be-

"You know," she said, "I've lived across the street from

you for nine years and I barely know you.”

“We know each other alright.” Addison said. He wasn’t quite sure what he was saying, just glad to finally talk to her.

“We go to the same college. I didn’t know that. You want to be a doctor, I didn’t know that.” She said, “I know you write great articles about next door neighbors.” Addison blushed.

“Really, all I know,” she added, “is that your name is Addison Ferguson. Hell, I don’t even know your middle name!”

“I have two of them,” he said.

She laughed, “See?!”

Addison looked at her, smiling and radiant with her hair pulled back. He was amazed at how cute even her earlobes were.

“Do you want to get coffee?” He said, “I’ll tell you my middle names.”

“Tell them to me now. Then we’ll get coffee.”

Their first date was drinking coffee and a crossword puzzle at the corner cafe, then ice cream cones and a walk around the university district. Their first kiss was five hours later, a clumsy peck outside the doors to her dormitory.

His middle names, her told her, were Thomas and Christopher.

§

Eveline found one of Addison’ textbooks while unpacking in their new house.

“I thought you sold all your textbooks.” She said.

“But that’s my organic chemistry book.” He said. Eveline looked at him, confused, “It’s what I was reading right before our first date.”

She tackled him and kissed him on the living room floor.

“The receipts for our first coffee and our first ice cream cone are in there too.” He said.

“You are so cute!” She giggled and kissed him some more.

§

Addison passed a farmer on the way to the hills as he called out her name to all promising trees. The farmer watched him walk by with a concerned look. God, he probably thinks I’m crazy, Addison thought, and then shouted at a spruce, “EVELINE!”

§

“I got you something.” Addison came up and wrapped his arms around her as she was mincing garlic in the kitchen, “a present for my lovely little museum coordinator.”

“You know I don’t like presents!” she said, turning around to face him, “What did you get me?”

“Come see!”

“Just tell me.”

“You have to come see.” He took her hand and led her

outside. A giant stone turtle decorated the front lawn.

“My God, Addison! You got me the turtle!”

“You deserve it,” he said, “and this place really needed one.”

She hugged him hard, then said, “We have to name it.”

“It’s a lawn statue!”

“We have to name it.” She said, “It looks like a Liam to me. Liam the lawn turtle.”

“Sounds good.” Addison said.

§

Halfway up the hill, a dense thicket of trees called out with optimism. They looked healthy and happy, dark green and tall, with a moderate amount of branches. These trees were the right types for her. He entered the thicket and began calling her name madly. His nose was running. Addison wiped his arm across his face to clean it and realized he’d been crying since he left the car.

§

“Where do you think we go when we die?” Addison asked her once in bed.

“I think we become trees,” she said.

“Really?” Addison asked. He was born Catholic.

“Yeah. Well kinda, I think our soul gets trapped in a tree

on the way out of our body.”

Addison turned to face her, “Trapped?”

“Yeah, trapped. You can get out if someone finds your tree and calls your name.”

“Indeed” Addison said.

“This is an old belief, you know,” She said, “I didn’t make this up.”

“I didn’t think you did.” He said.

“You can tell the type of person by the type of tree. You know the long branchless trees, the smooth ones like poles? Those are babies. The squat and gnarled ones are the elderly. We’d fall somewhere in between if we died now.”

Addison quickly hugged her close to him, “Don’t talk like that!”

“I’m sorry.” She said, “did I make you sad?”

“I just can’t stand to think of you dead. I really don’t know what I’d do with myself if you weren’t here.” Addison said, “I love you so much, Eveline.”

“I love you too, crazy pants!” she said, “don’t worry about a thing.”

She kissed his forehead, and they drifted to sleep.

§

He plodded through the forest. Dusk crawled in through the branches. He had been searching without stop since six this morning. He looked up at the gently darkening sky. This was her favorite time of day, the twilight hours. First time

he saw her it was dusk. She waved at him and he ran away. Ran into the house and hid, read comic books. He went back outside a little later to talk to her, he was going to talk to her, but she was gone, it was dark, she was probably eating dinner. Addison had gone back to his room, defeated.

Addison didn't notice the tree he was walking towards, his face was to the sky. He didn't notice the branch sticking out until it poked him right in the shoulder, made him wheeze. He stooped holding his shoulder and looked up at the tree. It was the tallest, greenest tree he'd seen. There was a bare spot in the branches near the bottom of the tree, made what looked like an entrance. Addison got down on his knees and crawled through.

It was like a natural fort, the tree. Addison would have loved this place as a kid, such a great hiding space with branches evenly spaced and twirling around the trunk like steps. It was such a magnificent, such a fun, playful tree. His heart began to sing.

He ran up to the trunk and cried out, "Eveline! I found you!" When he saw a hand come out from the bark, he wasn't even surprised.



So I was walking to the bus today and at the Ramada Inn was a little travel van full of kids and the van said, “Montesano Assembly of God”.

Now see, that phrase is weird for me. When a church is called an assembly of God I imagine it as some sort of army, that these ten year olds are the Montesano branch of the Jesus Militia, when judgement comes all the assemblies will come together and unite in the complete assembly, to battle whoever it turns out they battle. Or, i think of them assembling as God, like a transformer. All these little kids in their little Montesano bus, this Assembly of God, they'll combine to make his arm, his finger, something. I just stared at that bus, and those poor little kids shouldered with that big burden of Divine Army, or future biblical super-robot, just cos they wanted to go see the capitol.

Do you ever see cartoon people in real life? does it freak you out? It happened today at the crosswalk by the Starbucks: a family walking to Sylvester Park. The mom and dad and son and daughter all looked the same: the same pointy noises, same slightly numbed face and glassy eyes, same stooped shoulders as if they all spent their days in front of typewriters. I want kids to look individual, I don't want the creator to get uncreative, make them all look the same like some bad comic. Especially

the mom and dad. Husbands and wives shouldn't look the same. But these two did, they had the same bird beak noses.

Perhaps they were brother and sister, and still married.

Perhaps they were from Montesano.

There's an ad for a Buzz Aldrin watch outside Talcott's. In it they give a short biography of Aldrin and his accomplishments and how he used that watch to give pinpoint accurate times while on the moon. They had a quote of his about how, "I never knew I would travel to such amazing far off places, or achieve what I have achieved." It was all dramatic. I was confused.

See, I don't get watches. I don't get paying a lot of money for them. To me, they seem disposable. The whole point is to forget about them. If you constantly knew you had a watch on, imagine how uncomfortable your wrist would be, it'd be constantly itchy. No, the point is to forget you have the watch, but to have the convenience of just flicking your arm and knowing what time it is. So what does it matter if it's a Timex? Get a ten dollar watch made of plastic. You just need the time, time is fleeting, it's unimportant how you get it.

I imagine the new Buzz Aldrin Watch owner always checking the time:

"This is Stellar Time!" he'd say.

"This is Lunar Time!"

"This is Goddamn I've been to the moon and back time!"

"Aw man, it's just 1:15"

I passed by a whole group of Wanna-be Russian peasantry

outside of Caffe Vita, all self-importantly drinking coffee, discussing Euripides, and looking thoughtfully tortured and sallow. I see so many hipsters dressed like they just got off the boat from eastern, oppressive Russia. Hipster, your parents were not eaten by wolves, you are not named Petya Ivanovich. Drop the scraggly beard and the Fisherman's cap, the heavy brown wool coat and sallow, "I was in a prison camp" expression. You are from West Seattle. Your parents shop at Thriftway and read Mother Jones. you are going to Evergreen to study film. Dress like it.

They are but a pimple on the gigantic assembly of God, a toggle button on the grand transformer.

BUT!

ZACH'S HYPOCRICY!

There was a girl sweeping the outside of her store today, and I liked it because it felt like turn of the century New York to me. Here I am blasting the "Immigrant Experience" hipsters, and I'm all happy imagining myself as a paper boy, with the five and dime owner sweeping in front of me. I need to live in my era too.

As I was walking across the grass to the bus, there were two chubby high school girls getting off the bus and walking towards me. Both of them were wearing black t-shirts that said, "JUST FUCK OFF!". They were the same weight and body type, both had little purses and were walking to the market. They weren't made the same-like the family before- they looked structurally different, they were just trying to become the same, become a group by dressing the same. And the group they chose was pissed off high schooler with a shirt that said just

fuck off. They are the glory. the glorious assembly.

SCARY THING THAT HAPPENED TO ME WHILE WAITING FOR THE BUS

I was waiting for the bus and I looked to my left and there was a guy staring at me, wide-eyed staring, and eating a big, soft pretzel. his mouth was full, his cheek was puffed out with bread, and he was chewing INTENSELY. I've never seen a man eat a pretzel with that much concentration, and this guy was staring at me, as if challenging me, or defending his ground-as if I was going to take his pretzel.

Moral: let a man eat his pretzel.

BUT BACK TO BUS!

So I get on the bus, and so does the pretzel guy, but he finished eating and I guess I was no longer a threat cos he stopped staring at me. A teenage boy and girl get on the bus-the type of kids who get the day pass to go sit outside the mall and look fierce. So we are driving and the bus driver says over the intercom: "Let me just remind you there is no feet on the furniture." like she's the bus mom.

And the girl says, "What furniture? There's no furniture" like the smart aleck daughter.

And the boy says, "Go suck an egg!" He said it like he was a newsy. and I am thinking: what the hell era am I in? I'm all confused and then this girl starts singing out of nowhere then stops singing and says she remembers Claire's phone number, and then that Derrick is a bitch and I look back because it's

the oddest train of thought for someone to have: song, number, complaint. But, when I look, I see its two girls talking on separate cell phones, that's why it was so fractured. They just had the same voice. the exact same voice. I see they are two separate people, then close my eyes and their voice makes them one. They are grouping to have one loud voice to sing and complain in one breath.

I hope the last days don't come soon, because I see the people starting to assemble, starting to become the glorious army, and we are one scruffy, motley beast.



3.

You, dear reader, are now halfway through this zine and I'm sure you're saying to yourself, "Fine fine, we know all about Funwater busses and bike rides and what not. Now get off it! Tell us about your TEETH!"

So I will tell you: I have a weird thing with my teeth.

It's a crazy guilt/hatred/love for them. They are my child I had when i was fourteen and now have to support. I love them because they are mine, I hate them because they take so much time away from me drain so much, and feel guilty cos really, I don't treat them well at all.

I was brushing my teeth today and when I spit out the toothpaste it was yellow. I ate cheetos tonight so that could be it (that's what I'll tell myself). But I saw it and I said to my teeth, "you poor babies! the toothpaste should always be white when I spit out!" I felt bad that they had to be so unclean, and my teeth must have been embarrassed to let out yellow toothpaste.

But at the same time, they freaking deserve it. If I don't brush for two minutes, floss daily, not eat any candy they get all ugly and weak. It's crap. I scuff my arms like nobody's business and what do they do? They gets stronger. I walk barefoot and my feet get like leather. My limbs don't complain,

they're still fully functional.

And let me tell you, i'm not about to give up candy for my stupid mouth.

Let that be my third epitaph:

Zach Mandeville

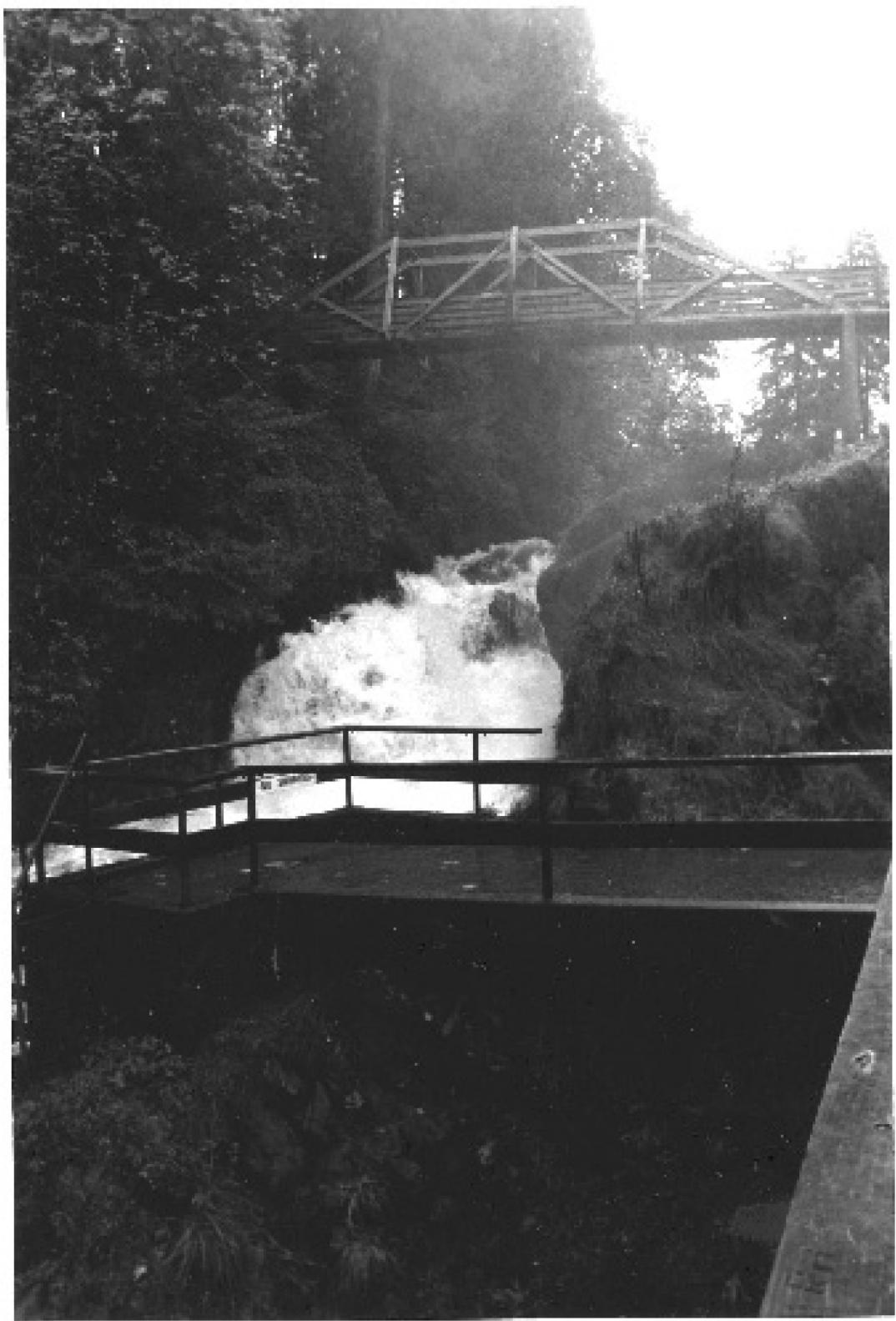
Loved his candy

too damned much

See, that's the thing: I get angry at my teeth. I see all they require and I say, "no you dumb needy things, toughen up." Instead of flossing, I eat three bags of swedish fish (I did. Ask Lindsey, she'll nod sadly) purely out of spite. I hate the dentist, and when I go there and have cavities I only get angrier and for a week afterwards eat candy for breakfast. Just to make my teeth HURT.

Then my teeth do hurt. And my toothpaste is yellow or red (from swedish fish, not blood) and I feel so bad for mistreating the poor guys. And I get sad, then get angry cos they made me sad...

Oh it is a vicious cycle!



William's Ghost

For Margie:

Summer is Barbecues smelled through closed windows, and shopping at air-conditioned Safeway just to get away from the heat. It's kids still screaming and running around wildly when she comes home with groceries, their shapes turned to shadow in the growing up dusk.

Summer is cold cut sandwiches for dinner because turning on the oven would only add to the heat. It's nostalgia dripping off every curb, roof and window, memories of two years ago when people came home for the summer, and Margie rereading a letter from a friend now in Omaha, a dab of mustard hiding on her cheek.

Margie worked for the city Parks and Recreation department, keeping all the city-owned bits of nature clean. She cut down the dead branches hanging dangerously over

nature trails, mowed the soccer fields and kept the baseball diamonds well swept. She cared for Tumwater Falls, Pioneer and the Historical park, and all the manicured greenery running alongside the Deschutes.

She was not born for this work, possessing a tall, unassuming frame fit more for a bookworm or a pampered foreverchild. Looking at her now, one would say she appeared half-formed: a gentle clean face grown rough and tired, a dark tan over should be pale skin, slender hands grown over with calluses, muscles forming on mild shoulders. She seemed to be midway between shifting from one person into another.

And she was, all due to one incident.

That being the death of William.

William being her best friend.

And the death being ugly, unexpected, and tragic.

Two years ago Margie was working towards a bachelor degree at the University of Washington. Saturday and she's studying anthropology up in her room when she gets a call from William's mother, crying and hysterical, telling her that William is dead. He had been out hiking up around Bellingham and attempting to wade across a creek rushing over with glacial water when he was caught up in an undercurrent and dragged underwater. They found his body floating fifteen miles from where he first started hiking.

Margie left college to help William's family, and attend the funeral, and to sit around crying for weeks.

Summer is little league baseball played late into the evening and twilight weddings at Tumwater Falls, and Margie working overtime to clean up the drink cups littered across the diamond and rake up the confetti strewn among the ferns. Summer is

video tape miniseries checked out at the library and Margie wishing she had a better way to spend a Sunday then to work till she's broken then come home and watch *Roots*.

That's Summer, and that's Margie.

She took the fan from her bedroom and placed it next to the lay-z-boy, along with the fans from her kitchen, office, and laundry room.

That's better, she thought, getting air blown on her from four directions. Her shirt crumpled next to her chair along with her shoes and socks, An open soda rested on the side table next to her, with the TV remote next to that, and Margie's night was set. Grabbing the remote, she sat back and flipped on the TV, let out a long sigh and sat back in the chair.

The credits for the fourth episode of roots had just finished when Margie heard a knock on the door.

Shoot!, she said to herself, fumbling for the shirt, it was too late for someone to be visiting her. She walked to the door, looked through the peephole, screamed and jumped back.

William was standing on the other side of the door.

Margie grabbed her chest and leaned against the coat closet. Panting and pale faced, she looked back through the peephole. William was still there, now scratching the back of his head and looking around her porch. She opened the door a crack. He spotted her through the opening.

"MARGIE!", he yelled happily. She let out another scream.

"William?" she asked, with a voice cracked and high.

He laughed, and said, "Of course it's me, Margie!"

She opened the door fully, and with hands shaking opened the screen door too, letting him in. A trail of water followed him inside and, as he stood in the hallway, formed a puddle at his feet. Margie stood a body's length away from him, leaned back as if ready to run, and looked her best friend over. He was dressed in a light blue t-shirt with darker blue sleeves, khaki shorts with pockets bulging with something, hiking boots, and thick socks. It was him- his crooked nose and wide smile, coffee eyes and bushy eyebrows, his close cropped hair he cut himself, the patch of scalp above his ear where the razor slipped.

"But you're dead," she told him gently as if breaking the news.

"I know, but I still wanted to see you," he said.

Manners overtook her; she quickly gestured to the closest chair "Sit down sit down!" she said.

"I don't want to mess up your carpet," he said, waiting by the doorframe. Then, gesturing down, "I'm kind of wet and I can't take off my shoes."

Margie felt dizzy "I don't care about my Carpets!" she wanted to hug him, but afraid she'd only hug air, "How are you?"

"I'm good!" he said. He walked over to the sofa and sat down, stretching his arms across the back of it, and crossed his legs. She went back to her recliner.

"Hi"he said, smiling broadly at her.

Margie tapped the edge of her seat, staring at him, then leaned forward and poked his cheek. It was solid. Cold as clay but solid. she put a hand on his shoulder, again solid and

there, and she started to cry happily.

"You're back!" she exclaimed and hugged him hard. His shirt was damp.

He laughed, "I'm back." He looked around her living room, studying with a glance her window curtains and TV set and coffee table covered with People magazines, "You got yourself a nice house here."

She thanked him and he just looked at her, smiling, then asked, "So what's new with you?"

Margie really didn't know what to say. What was new to her- a job promotion and a new mower- would be so completely out of context and alien to him. So instead she retold him her past two years: dropping out of college, moving back with her parents until she was ready to return to college, the realization she'd never be ready to return, at least anytime soon, starting her job of groundskeeper

"And I've been doing that for about a year or so. I moved into this house like six months ago. I'm just renting it, but it's a really nice house. I don't mind it." She rubbed the arm of her chair, "That's basically it. I'm now an official, permanent townie."

"Well, huh." he said.

"So what's new with you?" she asked, feeling instantly foolish for the question, unable to phrase what she was trying to ask, "I mean, what have you been up to? What's the past two years been like, I mean?"

"Um," he scratched the back of his hand, "I've been repeatedly drowning in the exact same spot I died, in the exact same way over and over again. That's really been pretty

much it."

"Oh good lord!" Margie said, hollow voiced, "You must be so hungry!"

Willie laughed, "I'm fine." he said, but she was already in the kitchen, "Do you want a soda, or some coffee? I have some tea, just the safeway stuff."

"I'm fine. really."

She rifled through her grocery bags still on the dining table: scotch tape, some pudding, a canteloupe, deodorant, mexican seasoning, saerkraut, and a copy of SPIN. As an aimless late night shopper, she was retarded.

"Do you want pudding?"

"It's okay, Margie."

"You have to eat something," She felt completely sure that she had to feed him something, "I can make you a sandwich," she said.

"A sandwich would be good," he said.

She rifled through her bread drawer. Bags full of butts and some hard crusty bits of sourdough. She ate the last of the good bread with dinner tonight.

The sound of the TV came like a whipsnap, he had turned off her movie and was now watching Family Guy. She could hear him laughing happily back in the living room.

"So how long you here for?" she asked, calling out over the TV.

"Just tonight." he answered.

The jar of jam bounced off the counter as she dropped it, spilling a bit of it on her sock.

"A night? You're here for a night?" Margie came back into the living room.

"I'm sorry Margie," he said, muting the TV, "that's all I get."

"And I'm giving you sandwiches and family guy?" her voice cracked, she talked fast, "We're going out to eat." He began to object, but she bounded to her bedroom and closed the door.

Inside her bedroom, Margie madly tore through her clothes, trying to find something decent to wear. She was still wearing her work clothes, a green, dirt splattered t-shirt and holey brown jeans. She found a decently clean black blouse and a nice pair of jeans and then examined herself in the mirror, rubbing whatever makeup she had onto her face. She looked at her reflection and started crying.

"You alright in there?" William asked through the door.

"I'm good!" she said wiping her face clean, "go back and watch TV. I'll be right out."

She came back to him skimming through the Spin Magazine, standing in her kitchen.

"Ready to go?" she asked.

"Of Course." he said.

"You know what, Margie?" William asked as they drove out of her neighborhood, turning right onto Trosper.

"What?" she smiled and looked over at him.

"If I had a laser gun, I'd just ziiip," he made a slashing motion against the window, across the patch of forest outside

“and all those trees would be gone.”

Margie let out a surprised happy noise, something halfway between a laugh and a sneeze. He really was sitting next to her. William. Just like it used to be, like it should be. Him staring out the car window and small-talking random bits of ridiculous, telling her that if he was to build a house, it’d be sure to have sentry towers. Or drinking coffee and discussing their angst teeny philosophy (“the basis” she says, “of all human behavior (sip of coffee) is fear”) and he suddenly mentions that he wished his entire left arm was a popsicle; bringing it up two hours later saying he never uses that arm anyway. Him constantly asking, “you know what we should do?” followed by plans to rig up the kitchen sink so it poured only chicken broth, or devising some way to crawl up walls.

“There’s a bunch of stuff I could do, if I had a laser gun,” He said, mostly to himself.

“It’s very true,” she told him, watching the road with hearts in her eyes.

The problem with this town is there is not a fancy place to take your ghost friend that’s open past eight or nine. Margie realized this with a thud in her stomach, driving past the ritzy Falls Terrace and Jean Pierre’s both closed up and pitch black, and all the higher end cafes and diners in both Tumwater and Olympia.

“There’s nothing open in this town.” she said as if it was her fault.

“Why don’t we just go to Cattin’s?” William said.

“I wanted to take you somewhere nice.” she explained,

wringing the fabric of the steering wheel.

“Cattin’s is nice.”

“They had maggots in the potato sacks!”

“Then we won’t eat fries.”

They drove down Capital toward Cattin’s.

Beside some lonely trucker at the bar, and some bored artistic youth smoking tortured cigarettes by the window, the diner was empty.

“Y’all play through the sprinklers or something?” Their waitress asked, glancing at William curiously. He smiled and laughed. “You kids are crazy.” she said and walked away.

They got a booth on the far right wall, with a window looking out at the dumpsters and parking lot of the hotel behind them. William opened his menu onto the table, leaning over it to study the different burgers, omelettes, and seafood platters the place had to offer. Water dripped off his hair, down his ears, off his forearms, making a puddle on the laminated menu. Margie tried not to stare, or to break into tears again, That’d just be embarrassing.

“Have you visited Black Hills again at all?” William asked her, looking up.

Margie broke her stare and looked at him, “I really don’t ever want to go back there again. I hated high school.”

William laughed, then started asking remember whens: memories of bad teachers and crap classes, his embarrassing situations and proudest moments and countless what-happened-tos of the famous kids. Margie obliged him with catch up stories-all the juicy gossip and funny tales- while she

tried to ignore the water soaking through his shirt and shorts, clinging to him like an unwanted tagalong.

“John Lamb works at Jack in the Box now? That kid was my idol.”

Did he die from swallowing water, or did the undercurrent pound him against a rock?, Margie wondered.

“There’s nothing wrong with Jack in the Box” she said.

“Remember how his band played every assembly? What was his band’s name? I think I liked them.”

Somewhere beneath the shirt were broken bones and swollen scrapes and a messy swirl of bruises. Were the bruises still fresh-bright purple and yellow- or do they fade on ghosts?

“Unchained Dilemmas” Margie said.

“Did Matt Farris ever finally come out?”

“He’s living with some forty year old guy now up in Seattle,” Margie said, straining to laugh.

Is there still water rattling in his lungs, pools filling up the bottom of them?

“I can’t make it stop.” William said suddenly.

“Make what stop?”

“This water. It’s always dripping. I can’t just turn it off.”

“I don’t mind.” Margie said, cursing her sad eyed staring and morbid thoughts.

“I know. It’s that waitress over there.” He pointed to the waitress taking orders four tables away, “She won’t stop looking over. I’m making a fucking puddle on their floor and staining their chairs.”

“It’s fine,” Margie said, “It’s Cattin’s.”

“She’s probably going to give me a towel or tell me to dry off and what do I do then? I’m not going to dry off.”

“Do you want to leave?”

Outside in the parking lot William looked immediately happier, stretching his arms behind him and puffing out his chest, “it’s good to be moving.” He said.

“Do you want to go back to my house?” Margie asked.

“ You know what we should do?” William said, pointing at Margie for emphasis, “We should go to the Top Foods and get iced tea and a big thing of sourdough bread, then sit outside the store and eat it.” It was a grand decree.

Margie could do nothing but agree.

Top Foods was scattered with 2 AM shoppers: Fathers buying diapers, hyper college students with armfuls of oreos and beer, the single young couple in the family planning aisle deciding on which condoms to buy, and Margie and William heading down the seasonal ad aisle, gawking at and grabbing all the back-to-school supplies.

“Who are these guys?” he asked pointing to cartoon characters printed on a pack of pencils. Margie didn’t know, “I don’t remember them. Must be something new.” he said.

They went to the bakery aisle and got their loaf of bread, then snaked in and out of each aisle to do more aimless shopping. William was happy to see all the new foods, Margie was happy to see him. Some times he’d walk ahead to the next aisle and Margie would have to follow after. And each time he appeared again, staring at something at the end of the aisle, Margie would

get a blast of some strong feeling she couldn't put a name to, a mix of happiness, surprise, nostalgia, and melancholy, and she'd run down to give him a hug. Each time she saw him after a brief absence(seperated by an endcap) was like they were first meeting, a whole new beginning, and she wanted to do something but didn't know what, hugging him was not enough but she didn't know what else, her hands were nervous and moving uncontrolled, like she was a piano player forced to only sing. But instead of tapping and touching every can on the shelf, she shoved her hands in her pockets and followed after William, giggling.

"Why are you laughing?" he asked, smiling back at her in the checkout stand.

"I'm just happy."

They went to the loading dock and sat on the stairs there. He ripped off a hunk of sourdough and handed it to her, then opened up the case of tea and offered her a can. She took a bite of bread then leaned back against the stairs, staring up at the streetlights and the bordering hills. She wanted to ask William how he was enjoying the night, how he was doing, but was afraid of the answer. I'm doing great, except that I'm dead. The night is great, except I'll be gone by morning. So instead she just told him funny stories, things found on her job-condoms on swing sets and creepy, burnt, mutilated toys-and he laughed and listened, chiming in with remembered stories from when they were 12 years old.

"You know what we should do?" he asked her after a while of talking, his mouth full of bread.

"What's that?" she asked

He swallowed, “We should go to Barnes and Noble and dumpster dive.”

She agreed that it’d be a good idea.

“But first we have to drink the rest of this tea.” He said.

“All of it?” there were six cans left.

“All of it.”

“I can’t! I’ll be sick.” She had already drunk 3 cans.

“I guess it’ll have to be my job,” he said. He laughed, “I really don’t need to worry about being sick tomorrow.”

He opened up one can after another and poured them down his throat. No effort, no difficulty, not even swallowing, more like dispensing, as if his body was empty inside, a container to be filled. Margie watched him, disgusted and sad.

They drove across the street to Barnes and Noble, parked in the front lot and walked around the long strip of stores to the dumpsters in the back, heading directly to the one overflowing with cover-free books perched atop a loading dock. William put both hands on the dock’s metal flooring and pushed himself up with finesse. Maggie watched from the ground

“Don’t spend too long up there!” she told him, nervous and excited, her head flitting side to side with a big grin on her face.

“Do you like Rick Moody?” William asked. He sat cross-legged in the pile of books, a thin paperback in his hand.

“Never heard of him.” She told him.

“This here says it’s got vivid imagery,” he said, reading the back of the book, “sharp dialogue, bitter, damning, sure. A

bellwether voice.”

“Just throw it down.”

“You like Jean Hegland?”

“I haven’t heard of her either.”

“I’ll just throw it down.”

They continued this, him picking out books for her, she catching them as he tossed them off the side.

“Why don’t you grab some for yourself too,” she told him as she caught her fifth book.

“I won’t really have time to read them,” he said, “and I’d just make the pages all wet.”

She cringed at his comment. Everything he said seemed to hint at, remind her, that he was dead. He talked like a new parent, so caught up in their new life change that everything they say is imbued with it, always hidden but visible between each word. His drowning took the background of everything he now said: death behind every preposition, haunts and ghosts wrapped around each comma.

“I guess I could leave some books on the shore for some wandering hikers. Scare them shitless and literate.” He talked mostly to himself, rummaging through the books, “Sandra Cisneros!” he suddenly yelled to Margie, “You love her don’t you?”

“I have enough books,” she said, hugging paperbacks close to her chest, “let’s go home.”

“It’s weird you having your own house,” he said, walking through the door, “It’s grown up Margie.”

She laughed, then asked if he was hungry. William said he was fine, but Margie felt famished. She went into the kitchen and grabbed some hot pockets from the freezer. William stayed in the living room and turned on the TV again. She could hear some Mtv clip show playing while she watched the time countdown on the microwave, her stomach rumbling.

"Hot pockets! Just like old times!" he exclaimed when Margie walked in with a plateful of them.

"You get one night back and I give you hot pockets for dinner." William didn't answer, his mouth was full of greasy meat and cheese, eyes closed and smiling. When he was done swallowing he picked up the remote and flipped through the channels, finally settling on some kids channel replaying episodes of Boy Meets World. "I love this show!" he gushed to Margie then turned back to watching the TV.

Margie watched him. His eyes glinted when a joke was mildly funny. When he found something hilarious, he'd smile first and then give a slightly delayed laugh, as if the joke needed time to register in his head. He'd always done that, as long as she'd known him. She studied his face: the stubble scattered slightly on his chin, the beginnings of a zit on his cheek, the perfect fading of hair for his eyebrows. She watched how he watched TV, leaned back in the corner of the couch, one hand sunk between cushions the other stretched along the back, his legs straight out in front of him, ankles crossed. She studied his neck and arms and legs, their comforting blemishes and tiny scratches and small scars. And she remembered the story behind every one of his scars, the events that caused each scratch. She had been with him during almost every accident. She was in the branches above him when he fell out of the tree; on the ground below shouting he was stupid when he jumped

off his house's roof. She was the one who ran for help when he got his hand squashed in the bus barn gate, giving him a star-shaped scar on his left hand. Almost every time he got hurt she had been right there to help him.

And this was their last night, and they were watching TV.

"I'm sorry, William, I've given you a terrible time back," she said suddenly, her eyes struggling to stay dry, "One night back her and I give you crappy reruns and hot pockets."

"What are you talking about, Margie," he said, "I'm having a great time."

"We should be out doing stuff or something." She said, searching for something they could do.

"We did lots of stuff tonight."

"We went to the store. That's boring."

"But I miss being bored," he said, suddenly serious.

She got out of her chair and sat down on the couch next to him. She wanted to lean against him, but instead just sat straight up.

"Remember when we built a tennis ball bomb at like three in the morning and were throwing it against my house trying to make it go off?"

She leaned into him, "Yeah," she said laughing.

"And my dad came out and screamed at us."

Margie laughed, "I remember we used to have sleepovers all the time." She took a bite of her hot pocket, "It's crazy our parents even let us."

William thought about it, watching a commercial for car insurance, "They knew it'd be impossible to separate us. I

mean we were practically brother and sister.”

“It’s not like we did anything,” Margie said, with a smile like she was wrapped up in a warm blanket, “Just watched crappy movies and ate pizza.”

William asked if she remembered the first time they met. She laughed, said no, and they began swapping memories, reviewing their entire lives as if it was a clip show, retelling each part of their friendship and every stupid joke and Simpsons quote. They talked nonstop, watching Boy Meets World play out one episode after another on the muted TV.

When the sunrise came neither were ready, both in the middle of retelling some middle school memory. William glanced over his shoulder and saw the strip of orange at the bottom of the skyline.

“Oh shoot, Margie,” he said, voice hollowing, “I have to go soon.”

“Do you want some breakfast or something first?” she asked.

“No, I mean I have to go really soon.” He stood up. His face looked gray and tired.

She walked him to the door and hugged him hard, “I don’t want you to go,” she said, “You shouldn’t go.”

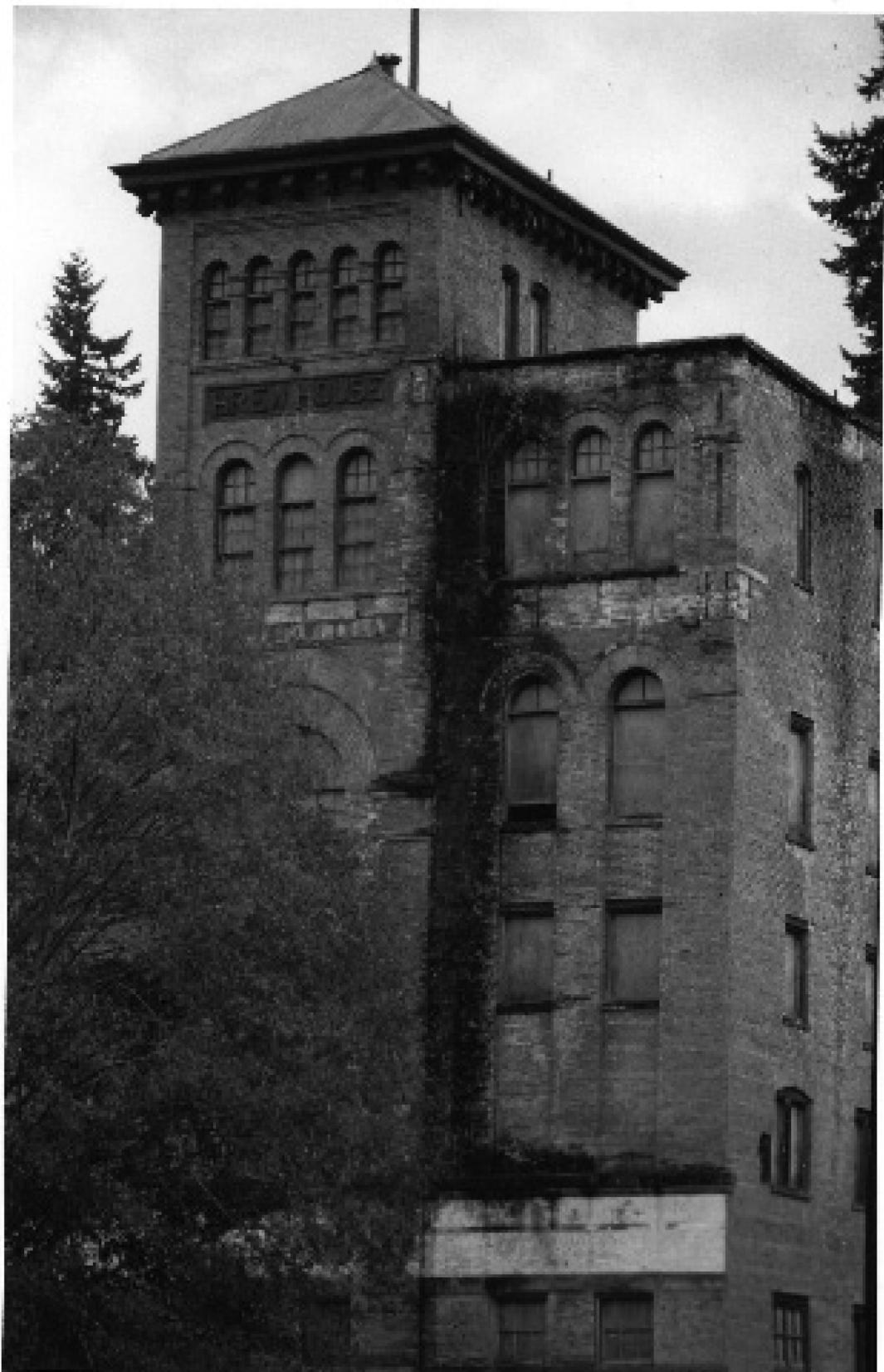
She didn’t remember the first time they met. She couldn’t. They had been just babies, a playdate arranged by their parents. They had been friends before they had memories; crawling, pooping, sleeping, and eating together.

He pulled her closer to him, squeezing her tight with his hands trembling, “I love you Margie. You know that, right? I love you.”

"I love you too," she said, burrowing her head in his shoulder. She could feel his skin and his bones beneath the wet clothing, could feel the muscles in his arms and his breath pushing his chest against hers. He was cold and he was dead but he was there, she could feel his feet against hers, his hair rubbing across hers, his head nuzzle against her shoulder and then his mouth kiss her neck. And then she was grabbing nothing, nothing left of him but some mist in the air and a puddle on the floor.

The next day, Margie called in sick.









Fletcher

A couple days ago, on my way, late, to work, I passed a raccoon freshly killed on the road. Sometime last night some too fast car or truck hit the raccoon and sent it sprawling to the edge of the bike lane, with broken legs and back and a split open stomach, and I passed by it early the next morning, meeting the animal on its first day of death. I saw him and instantly choked up, like a big rock or teardrop traveled up and lodged in my throat. I don't know any other reaction to death.

And I wanted to say something or do some sort of memorial, but I don't know how you memorialize road kill. I could bury him with a few kind words and moment of silence, away from the sun and asphalt and cars, but he's wild and, as I said, split open, and I had no gloves or anything to keep his possibly harmful blood and liquids off my hands. And I was late to work. So I just biked past him, saying, "I'm really sorry." And continued on.

He was there the next morning and the morning after that. And he was there each afternoon as I biked home again. The raccoon became another landmark of my bike ride, after the ass flowers and before the shirtless man running the espresso stand.

After a day or two he began to swell and started to stink. 20 feet away and I'd have to hold my breath because the smell

was terrible. And then he started to ooze and his fur started to fade away or fall off in patches. After a week or so more of his bones became visible, his face became less recognizable, his spread out insides turned completely rancid.

Then he got smaller, his legs and arms oozed into a big mass together, his body flattened into a leaking patch of fur, a circle of brown and red something. He no longer had a face, or a head at all- anything recognizable. And that bit of him became smaller and smaller, into a lump, into a patch, Into a smear of brown on the asphalt. The smell disappeared too, until all still left of him was the faintest streak of discolor on the street.

Maybe cos I'm overly sensitive, too prone to stupid ten year old romance, or maybe it's cos I was overly tired and could easily turn crazy, but sometime during his decomposition I really started to like the guy. I loved the raccoon. I told Lindsey of him and the developments in his time after life. I gave him a slight nod as I biked quickly by each day at 8 and 4.

Because it's all such a mystery to me. I mean every simple, stupid thing. If asked, I really couldn't tell you how phones work. I'm amazed by my tongue as I talk, and I don't really understand what happens as we sleep, or the different shapes of animals feet, or how they run the bulk candy section at Top Foods. And I really do not understand death.

This year has been marked with death: my best friend Andy lost his father, John. Lindsey lost her father, Lee, one of the greatest men I've ever met. My great aunt Anna died, so did my childhood cat Mikey, Andy's cat Neil, and Lindsey's 8 week old kitten Puma. All these wonderful people and pets were here one night and the next morning gone.

But Raccoon stayed out in the open, showing exactly what happens in the coffins under tombstones or in the shoebox in your backyard, displayed each morning all the ugly stinky parts of the afterlife, and all its sacred beauty.

Because each day, on display, was the raccoon's slow return to earth. His bones and blood and fur broke down, bit by bit and part by part, turned to smears and dust and sank into the asphalt and dirt.

How wonderful that is! That every part of him can become any new part of any new thing. Bits of him become the dirt and the worms and the plants, rocks, and trees. Nothing is wasted, all of him is part of some larger whole.

I don't know what happens to our souls after we die, where we go, what we become. I don't like to think of some place called heaven, that final point, the place where we all just end up. That just doesn't seem real to me, that these lives so mysterious and dumbfounding end in such a linear fashion like a bus line.

I believe our souls break up again, like all those bits of our bodies, than slow journey back into bigness. That we become something again, our voices caught up in the veins of leaves, our songs and stories kept up in rocks. Each memory is every dirt pebble and sidewalk stone and our endless lines of mothers and fathers become the flash of streetlights, the bark of dogs, become moss and trees and babies and mothers and fathers again.

The raccoon started as everything formed into one body, the eternal light held inside him, and he ended as one body spreading out back into everything, the light reflecting now on everything I see.

And it's not circular. I don't see life that way. It's not the same body breaking down and forming again. It's more like everything is a steady pulse, a beating like a heart, each death adding to this bright hard heartbeat, making our world, our lives, pound.

And I don't worry about all our poor cats or Lee, Aunt Anna, and John, because they're now part of that beating, and that has to be a great place to be. And I miss them, but nothing really leaves here, just takes a new shape. And no one's voice or life is ever gone, it's just heard and felt from a different place.

That raccoon reminded me of all of that, and was a tremendous friend for it. I just wish he didn't have to show me on the hot, blaring asphalt. I wish he could've lived his after days more respectfully, so that he isn't just remembered as road kill.

So we give him life by giving him a memory. And I give him a new name better than roadkill.

His name was Fletcher.



Wrap Up

Next Issue Preview

J am now officially enrolled in Barber college. I went in today to Quality Beauty College(across the street from Capital Mall) filled out the application, paid my registration fee, got my orientation packet(packet summary: dress well and arrive on time, student parking is to the side of Circuit City) and I'm all ready to go.

My instructor woman asked, "are you excited?"

"I am!" I said, sincerely pumped about all this.

Barber school, I hear, is hell. Not because of difficulty (as my barber told me, the school is just you waiting in between cigarette breaks). It's just hard to get past all the beauty school kids. There will be seventy kids going to college with me. The majority of them are local high school girls and I'll be the sole barber. As I walked into Quality Beauty College (across the street from capital Mall) the first thing I noticed was the 100 barber chairs and mirrors, with mannequin heads coiffed and cut at every station. This made me happy and laughy. Then I go to the main desk where there's a sixteen year old girl resting her head on it, looking bored and slightly angry, and she looks at me with her eyebrows raised, annoyed at everything about this world and about me. I imagined 6 months of 60 of these

girls, and it was disheartening.

But, it'll be good.

There's a inspirational slogan cut out and pasted on the college owner's office wall. It says, "Those that do not blend in go hungry." I stared at that slogan for so long, thinking, "What the fuck does that mean?"

I'm going to tell you why I'm excited so much about barbering, and basically about life in general. Well, life in general, first off goes to Lindsey. She's kind of the basis of all my happiness. the chicken stock to my harvest noodle soup. I suck at romantic analogies, but you'll see that the hearts there. You all should wish you're chicken stock, I tell you.

Serious.

But see, I went and got my haircut today. And talked to my barber, who is my sage. He is my wise ferry man by the river, the man who knows the secrets to life. And we talked shop while I got my hair cut, and then afterwards we talked for like 20 minutes just sitting on the couch and barber chair. And I realized, "I'm gonna be able to talk to him every day. This guy will be my boss, my work partner." It's good to have the person you look up to be the same person you're going to work for.

I'm going to be a barber, a real community member! A neighborhood is made up of a school, church, library, copy place, diner, and barbershop. I'm going to be a town barber!

Funwater is becoming my actual community, guys, not just the place I grew up in, not just my springboards. This is the place I work in and live in and support.

I will cut hair for the town, I will write my books for the

town, I will support it's art spaces and coffee places, its local farms and zine libraries and I'll start some of my own some day. I will build my home in Tumwater improper, along with the Funwater Press, Bindery, Barbershop, and Bookstore. One day I'll help make Funwater as great as it once was.

This isn't a place I want to revile and leave. It isn't my roots and only that. It's my community, it's my town, and If I have a problem with it, I'll stay here and work to fix it.

I am excited for my immediate future. I will tell you that. I was telling Lindsey tonight what type of sink I'd like our bathroom to have. I am excited for houses, for backyards and couches and newly bought window curtains, big beds and broken fridges. And they are all in sight. They're blurry tiny specks, but still in my range of vision.

Now, do these thoughts help me now, these feelings of empowerment and townsfolkitude? Not really. Lindsey and I showed this French foreign exchange student around town today, so she could hang out with young kids (I don't know why we were chosen to do this- we were nominated by a friend's mom).

But yeah, we were to show her the fun exciting part of town.

ACTUAL DIALOGUE

Zach: We could go to a playground and play on the swing sets.

French Girl: [blank stare]

ZACH[later]: We could throw rocks at a dumpster.

French Girl:[unhappy stare]

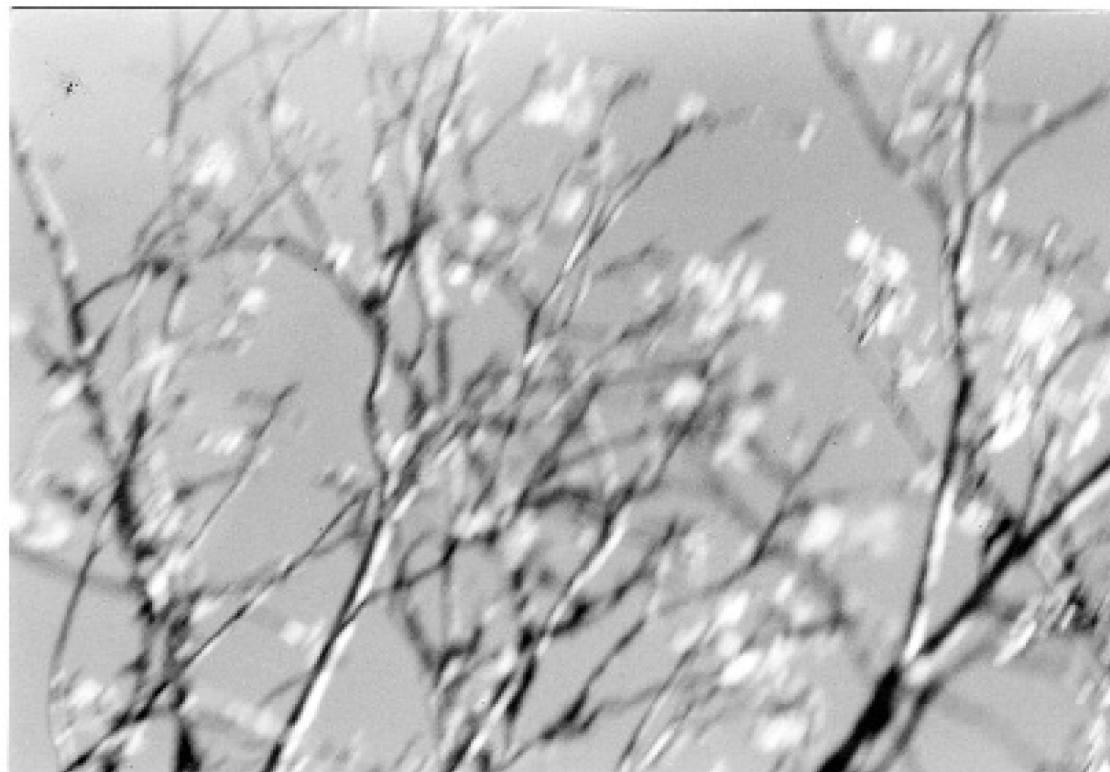
We weren't successful. We went to Old School Pizza, went to Batdorf and then were at a loss. What do you do as a group here besides the small town things? How do you explain to someone the beauty of Fartstown (the industrial section of downtown Olympia), the wonderful, fun feeling of walking down railroad tracks and complaining of the smell? How do you explain the best thing to do at night is go to Taco Bell and laugh at the angry, shirtless hillbillies, and fall in love with the three year old in the frog suit, and the fathers eating soft tacos with their sons. You can't take French foreign exchange students to dumpsters and alleys, take them to your street curb and tell them, "We're going to sit here, eat a popsicle, and hope something wonderful happens." They won't believe you, no matter how much you assure them something sublime always happens on street curbs. It's the Funwater guarantee.

But barbers don't have to give tours, they can rant on whatever they want. No one will try to stop my long talks on town history-on founders, freeways and old general stores-when I've got a razor and scissors pointed at their head.

I'm going to cut hair and make friends. and buy a house in Funwater with a porch and weeds in the sideyard. And I'm going to paint that house the brightest shade of beige. Cos if you don't blend in, you go hungry.

At barber school they got a barber textbook. It's thick. They have a separate one for cosmetology and estheticians, and they're all put out by a company called Milady's.

Whenever I open my book I'm going to say, "My lady" and nod politely to it. because I am a gentleman, and that's what gentlemen do. *Thank you for reading Funwater Awesome. I really do appreciate it. And I hope you enjoy your lollipop.*



Thank you for reading Funwater Awesome! I really do appreciate it, and I hope you enjoy your lollipop.

If you want to write to me, or relay a message through me to Lindsey Carr (photographer extrodinawesome) the address is:

*Zach Mandeville
613 Ensley Lane SE
Tumwater, WA 98501*

If you'd like to order another Funwater Awesome, for whatever reason, just send 5 dollars (well concealed) to that address above.

Also! if you can't stand standard mail, but still want to write to us, my email address is funwaterawesome@gmail.com

That's All.

Thank you again.

-Funwater, February 2006

LOLLIPOP

(ELECTRONIC VERSION)