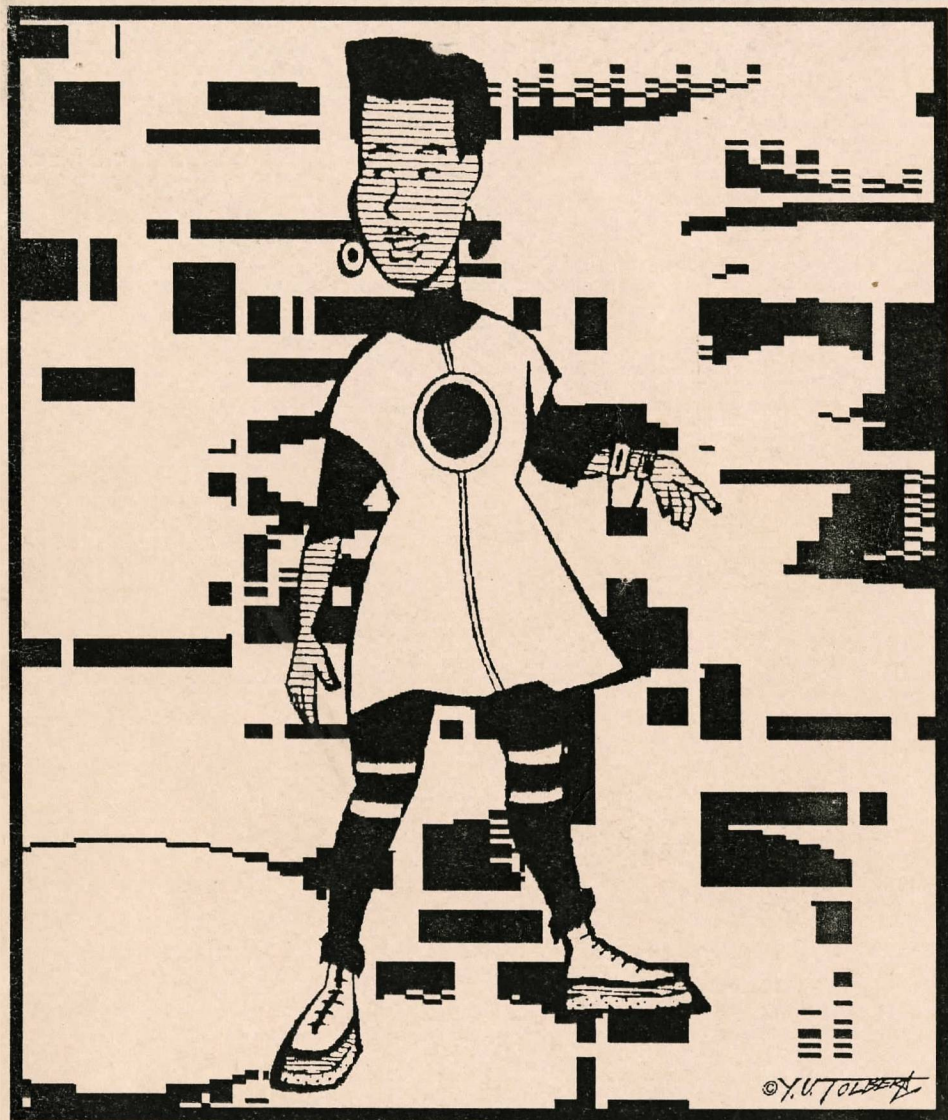




Cathedral

ISSUE # 1



WITH STORIES BY:

Patrick King, Karl Koweski, Emerson Dameron

This zine proudly supports the Underground Literary Alliance and its member writers. To find out about this kick-ass group, go to www.literaryrevolution.com

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Cathedral is a litzine published in January and July, edited by Patrick King and published by Kathleen King.

Sure, we do love submissions, thanks for asking. E-mail them to Kathychaser@hotmail.com or snail-mail them to:

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Please keep in mind the format of this zine and include two or more pieces of fiction or creative non-fiction. No poetry please and nothing over fifty pages.

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Thanks to Yul Tolbert for the excellent cover design.*

Patrick King



Generation Nothing

I

Joe Griggs allowed his life to pass by in black and all other forms of dark colors. Throughout elementary school, throughout high school, Joe walked the halls a stranger to his classmates who were in turn a gallery of strangers to him. Joe had friends but they came to him only while he was dreaming; women with silk lips and long arms that twisted to envelop his body.

He sometimes tagged along with his older brother Tom. Joe would stand in the back of a crowd of boys in a cramped apartment, trying not to be noticed as they got high around him. Sometimes they passed the joint toward him. Joe would take a hit and it would loosen him up. He might say a few words or laugh at some jokes.

Joe imagined that women's lips tasted like silk until he found out they tasted like clay.

There was an incident. Tom had just gotten a promotion at the pizza place where he worked. Joe met Tom at his apartment and the two brothers drove around a few of Atlanta's seedier neighborhoods looking for a lay. Tom paid for two women, a mother and a daughter. They were both fat and had greasy blond hair. The two women got in the car and gave Tom directions to their apartment building.

The building should have been condemned.

Joe was in the main area, on the couch, getting a blowjob from the mother. Tom was in the bedroom with the daughter.

She stopped and looked up at him. "My God," she said. "You're a beautiful young man."

Clay. She had allowed Joe one kiss on the lips and she tasted like clay. Then she went down on him. She unbuttoned her shirt a little and exposed her sagging breasts to him. Then she laid back. She motioned for Joe to undress her. Joe wasn't sure what to do but he was dying to know what it felt like.

II

Tom hired Joe as a dishwasher. Years passed. Joe got into a routine. He was happy with his routine. It made it easier for him to pretend he was invisible, to disappear.

He left his apartment at three o'clock and walked to work. He carried his dinner in a brown paper bag. From four o'clock to about one in the morning he scrubbed pans, plates and glasses. He went home and watched TV for the rest of the night. He could count on his routine six nights a week.

III

Tom fired Joe but he said it was for his own good. He said that Joe needed to do something on his own for once. He needed to grow up. He needed to branch out a little, spend some time on his own.

So Joe looked through the paper. He looked for a job where he wouldn't be noticed, some place where he wouldn't draw any attention to himself. He couldn't find anything.

He took the paper to Tom. "Look," Tom said, "here's one." They wanted security guards.

"Fuck that," Joe said. "I'll have to break up fights and shoot people and shit. It's not for me."

Tom laughed under his breath. "Nah. I've got a friend that does this. He reads books all night and if he sees anything suspicious he calls the real cops."

Tom picked up the phone and called the main office, pretending to be Joe. He got Joe a seat at their next training session.

It was a lecture. Joe sat in the last row of folding chairs, holding a notepad on his shaking knee. He tried to take notes. He tried not to make eye contact with the instructor. At the end of the lecture they issued everyone a uniform and a sew-on badge and gave everyone a location to report to the following night.

Joe was assigned to a place called The Phantom Club.

IV

Joe walked in and found the owner. He was a gruff man who slumped as he walked. He looked like he was in his mid thirties.

"There are some rules," he said. "Mainly don't drink or sleep. And try to at least look like you're keeping things safe, okay?" Joe nodded. The owner turned around and went into his office, slamming the door. Joe found a barstool and dragged it away from the bar. He set it down near the wall. He sat on it and folded his arms over his chest and tried to disappear into the wall.

The night wore on. The club filled with people. Bands started to play. It occurred to Joe that this job might make him even more invisible than his dishwashing job had. Everyone seemed to be ignoring him. At the

restaurant, people were constantly shouting at him, telling him to hurry up. He could get used to sitting in a chair and listening to music all night.

V

He had been at The Phantom Club for a couple of weeks when Marie Ruiz introduced herself to him. She walked up to him and stood next to him for what seemed like a long time. Joe looked away. She put her foot on the barstool and shook it a little. Then she started to talk, nervously.

It occurred to Joe that she might be half as nervous as he was. He was nothing to get nervous over.

She asked him questions and he answered them. His answers were short and to the point. Part of him wished she would go away. But her brown skin seemed to shine and her words had a soft, soothing tone to them.

"The boys that come here are all creeps. I mean, just creeps. But I tell you, I saw you and you don't look like a creep. You're not a creep, are you?"

Joe shook his head.

VI

She moved in with him. On a Saturday, the two of them walked back and forth between the apartment Marie shared with a girlfriend and Joe's apartment. They made several trips, carrying Marie's clothes, her stereo and various parts of her computer.

Joe particularly liked her computer.

He liked to get online and pretend he was someone else. He liked the anonymity. He could be anyone he wanted to be.

VII

He had conflicting feelings about it all. Marie was an art student. She liked to draw him while he was sleeping, in the early mornings. And while they were not quite silk, her lips were soft.

But they were also dry, chapped. And her nails cracked on his back as he made love to her.

Coming home from work, and opening the apartment door, watching Marie sleep in the pink light of the rising sun, Joe could almost feel love rising inside of him.

She woke up and put her arms around him.

VIII

Her screen-name was CYBERSLUTT and she wanted to fuck Joe with her words. Fuck me, she wrote. Get inside my wet, wet pussy.

Joe looked at the words on the computer screen and started to jerk off. Marie was at school and Joe had had time to kill before he went to work.

He had no idea how new, how fresh he would feel, pretending to be someone else. This is how it feels to be normal, not to be shy, he thought.

IX

"Never trust a man," she had said. "Not even a shy man. They'll all break your heart."

Joe had come home at his usual time; five in the morning. He hadn't been going to work for days. He had found an all-night Internet café before work one day. He had been spending his nights there, writing to women in chatrooms.

When he walked in the door she threw the phone at him.

"Some man calls me and asks if I know where my boyfriend is. That's all he says. Then he hangs up."

She told him to get out and he did, even though it was his apartment.

Hell, Joe thought, it must have been the club owner. The asshole. Joe took the elevator down to the ground floor and walked outside.

X

He sat on the steps outside the apartment building for a while. Occasionally, he'd look behind him, to see if Marie was looking out the window. She never was. Might have been sleeping. The call might have come early, when his shift was supposed to start.

He wondered if she really meant as much to him as it seemed. It occurred to Joe that he didn't know anything about her. Not really. He never asked any questions about her life. Did he care about her or did living with a woman make him feel less shy?

He didn't want to think about questions like these. He didn't want to think at all. He wanted to feel human.

Joe stood up and headed in the direction of the Internet café.

XI

He was at his favorite table, on his favorite computer. He logged on and pretended.

He pretended that he was in a real café having a real conversation with a real woman. He pretended he was handsome.

He often wondered if the people he typed love-messages to were putting on a similar show for him. Of course they were. They were just as lonely and terrified of reality as he was. That was part of what made it special. Two lonely people meeting in a place that doesn't exist.

Joe looked up from his computer and saw someone. It was a blond woman with short, boyish hair and a long, old-fashioned dress. She was sitting at the bar, having a coffee. He had noticed her before. She was always here. Sort of her hangout. Sometimes Joe thought he could feel her eyes staring at him.

The two of them caught each other's eye. Joe's head snapped back to his computer. Warm sweat began to bead all over his body. Especially his palms.

She picked up her coffee and walked over to the table where Joe was sitting. She sat down at the computer next to him. She logged on.

"You've got a beautiful face," she said.

X

She was on top of his naked body, fucking him. They were in her apartment.

"You ever been alive, Joe?" she asked.

"No," Joe said. She started fucking him faster, violently.

"You ever been alive, Joe?"

"No." Thrusting harder, fucking harder.

"I want you to be alive, Joe. Right now. Come alive and fuck me Joe."

The silky warmth of her body. So tight. This new blond woman was fucking him fiercely.

He had forgotten her name. But the way she felt. So warm.

Conclusion
Or
Something just went kaboom

Of course he was shy and lonely and had a beautiful face. He realized that after he left the woman's apartment. I'm beautiful, he thought. But it doesn't matter. The colors are always dark and the lips always rough. Something quite unlike silk.

Marie forgave Joe but the relationship fizzled. She moved out.

"The thing is," Tom said, after Joe asked to get his dishwashing job back, "I don't think you've tried living your life. I don't think you've learned how."

"I just want my routine," Joe said. "Something I can count on."

Several weeks after he got his job back, Joe walked to the front of the restaurant with an armful of plates for the Sunday night buffet line. A woman in her early twenties with black skin and bright-red hair walked up to him. She pretended to look over the pizzas in the buffet line. Then she looked at him. "I hope I'm not being rude or anything," she said, "but, do you have a girlfriend?"

Joe looked at his shoes and admitted he didn't. She asked for his phone number and he told her the best way to reach him was to call the pizza place. He was always here.

Although that wasn't completely true. When he wasn't at work he was at the Internet café, chatting it up with CYBERSLUTT and girls (he hoped they were girls) like her. And he created words and sentences and paragraphs of lust and fucking. He was good at it. He was good at nothing.

Patrick King

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## **Hours Beyond The Pale**

Charlie Sullivan was sitting on his bed stroking Tim Gallavan's hair. Tim's head was limp in Charlie's lap. This had been the most passionate, violent evening of sex Charlie had ever been through. They had bitten into each other's skin, hit each other, kicked each other and drawn tears and blood. The violence was spontaneous, fluid, natural. Neither of them expected it. They gave in to their urge to possess, to frighten, to control. They were filled with lust and rage because they had passion and didn't understand that passion could be subdued, conquered, lulled into sleep.

"Goddamn, I love you," Charlie said. Charlie was awake because he was scared and because his stomach was bubbling with a gassy sickness.

Charlie ached like his entire body was becoming a sickness. He pushed Tim off his lap. Tim flopped loosely onto his side of the bed; murder and calm and calm and sickness creating calm and calm becoming the sickness becoming a calm becoming a sickness.

Tim was face-down in a pillow. One arm hung over the bed. Charlie got up and went to the bathroom to clean himself up.

In the shower, the water tapped Charlie like razorblades. He dug his hands into his chest and traced the scratches that Tim had gashed an hour earlier. Or two hours. Time sometimes click-clock's its way from WHEN to WAS without letting you know.

Charlie got out of the shower and wrapped a towel around his waist. Steam from the scalding water had burned Charlie's body red. The mirror on his medicine cabinet had fogged over. He had been in the shower for click-clock minutes. He knew it felt like click-clock click-clock.

Charlie opened the bathroom door and steam billowed into the hallway. He heard something like a moan coming from the master bedroom and thought that it might be his lover crying out because he was lonely. But Charlie wasn't in so much shock that he didn't realize that the moan couldn't have come from Tim. Maybe it was the wind becoming violent.

His body turned icy when an absurd subconscious spasm suggested that the moan came from his mother, who had been dead for almost seven years. But this was an equally absurd idea.

Charlie walked back toward the bedroom. His towel slipped off in the middle of the hallway. He stopped cold. His nudity reminded him of click-clock hours ago when the first beads of sweat rolled off Tim's back and onto Charlie's tongue. His nudity reminded him that he existed.

He was aware that he existed and his new awareness left a stunning haze of vibrations in his field of vision. He was incredibly warm and incredibly cold at the same time.

He click-clocked his way to the bedroom. The shag carpet danced in vibrations. Aware. Aware that he existed.

“Shhh...” the carpet said. “Best not to wake the lover.”

Charlie had only a vague sense of who this “lover” was. Aware. Aware that he existed because he was breathing, because he could taste the air.

There was a body lying face-down on the bed in front of him. Charlie walked over to the side of the bed where the body’s arm flopped over the side as lifelessly as a doll. Charlie bent down and kissed its hand. The skin was surprisingly warm.

The corpse leaned over and the two men embraced and click-clock click-clock until being aware that faceless is falling falling falling into the abyss of heaven.

Forget me not and collect my names.



**Karl Koweski**

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Frigidity

Syzmanski stood thigh deep in a snowdrift across the street from the snowdrift momentarily claiming my thighs. We exchanged glares through the swirling snow.

Residents of Hammond, Indiana, that blighted tract wedged between US Steel and Amoco Refinery, knew only two climates. Sweltering hot and bitterly cold, the weather exacerbated to the extreme by Lake Michigan's chimney effect.

Both climates had its advantages for seventh graders with no money in their pockets. In the summer we could stew in the public pool or hunt mosquitoes with BB guns. But winter was when we came into our element. Only with snow on the ground could a kid hang off the rear bumper of a car while the unsuspecting driver braved the slippery streets for a case of Schlitz and a pint of Smirnoff at the local liquor store.

Depending on the vehicle as many as seven of us could hang off the bumper, bitch-slapping each other as we jockeyed for the best hand-hold. We had it down to a science best exemplified by Syzmanski and myself, the Oppenheimer and Einstein of "skeeched" as we referred to the practice of getting dragged behind automobiles.

Competition was fierce. When the first flurries descended from the leaden sky we'd suit up, a process which for me meant layering every pair of sweat pants I owned over my underwear and long johns, not to mention the drawer full of collegiate sweatshirts, all of them Christmas gifts from successful cousins who were able not only to get accepted, but graduate with honors from such prestigious schools as Indiana University Northwest and Purdue Calumet.

The same process I'm sure occurred throughout town as Zurek, Niksik, Fydoreski, Wojo, Syzmanski and a cavalcade of lesser minions and toadies prepared for battle.

In the end it always came down to Syzmanski and I. I could not allow a stupid polack wearing moon boots to skeech more cars than me. Of course, we were all polacks the only difference being Syzmanski was actually born in Poland which we all agreed made him that much lacking in common sense. His ignorance enhanced his skeeched ability. He'd chase down and dive after cars even the most hardened skeeched (me) wouldn't have glanced twice at.

The night I stopped skeeched forever, Syzmanski had me by a solitary car. We could hear the distant rumble of the city's snow plow, boxing in cars with tidal waves of pollution-darkened snow and laying down rock salt in such quantity that it would rust out the quarter panels of your car just thinking about it. Only minutes remained before the plow reached the

side street where we stood beneath the shadow thrown by St. Casimir's steeple. Any moment we'd break for home.

A pair of headlights too close to be anything other than an Escort appeared down the street. A dim light atop the roof fought against the wintry gloom. The Auriellio's pizza delivery boy. He pulled up to the stop sign heralded by AC/DC blasting out of the speakers. He sported an awesome mullet and the remains of a spliff hanging off his lip.

"Get on boys," he hollered.

We rushed to the back of the Ford and set to fighting over a strip of chrome about as long as a school desk. We all had at least a tenuous grip when the pizza boy hit the gas. The wheels spun in the slush. It went nowhere.

The car had to lose some weight. Tickling was out of the question so we commenced throwing elbows into each other's faces. Zurek let go first. His heart wasn't in the whole skeeching business anyway. Syzmanski hammered at Niksik's fingers until he got the message and bailed.

Just as the Ford's bald ass tires found traction, Fydoreski caught me with an elbow just below my right eye. Though dazed I had sense enough to grab at a pair of legs slipping by on my left.

Syzmanki's right moon boot popped off in my hand and I chucked it over my shoulder, keeping a grip on one of his shins. I managed to crawl over his body and latch onto the bumper just as he let go.

For a car to count as a point, the skeecher had to hold on for at least a block. Syzmanski didn't last thirty feet. I held on a block before letting go. Fydoreski rode the car toward home. Syzmanski and I were dead even which was good enough for me.

"You're an asshole," Syzmanski said wriggling his quadruple-socked foot into the moon boot's sweaty innards. "You know what my dad would do to me I come home missing a boot?"

"Same thing any Polack'd do. Something stupid."

"You're Polish, too, Koweski."

"In name only."

Syzmanski and I pushed through the snow toward our homes. The utter whiteness of the snow lulled me into a trance allowing the Carmelite van to pass by unnoticed. Only when I saw Syzmanski giving chase did I realize the game was not yet over.

Syzmanski caught the van. I raced behind and at the last possible second I leapt catching the bumper with my right hand. My momentum, however, twisted me onto my back. I fought to hang on before suddenly, inexplicably, my underwear seven layers removed from the street shot

upward giving me a wedgie so severe it deepened my ass crack by two inches and pulled my testicles up just short of my chin.

My hand slipped from the van. My glove remained fixed to the bumper as the van and Syzmanski accelerated. I laid in the road, spasming. Frantically, I tried to dig the Fruit Of The Looms out of my ass.

My mind yammered, maybe by relieving the pressure within the next few seconds I might save at least one of my balls.

The layers of clothes defeated my numbed, naked fingers. I howled in frustration. I cried. I did the Curly Shuffle.

Dear God, I've neutered myself. My mind reeled. I regained my feet. Tears frozen to my face. My hand rigid with cold. My balls felt like two migraine headaches nestled in a tightrope hammock. Syzmanski, that dumb polack, had won. I vowed then as I trudged slowly home I'd never skeech again. Likely, I'd never speak in anything other than a falsetto again. Life had defeated me, again.

Karl Koweski

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**Feed 'Em To  
The Fish**

"What's with the music?" I ask Holly as she refills my draft.

By way of acknowledging my existence, she raises an eyebrow.

"It's been close to an hour now since I put my two bucks in the juke, and, so far, if it ain't Dixie Chicks it's this disco crap."

"So what do you want me to do about it, Vic?"

She's looking at me like I'm an idiot, again. Not even eight o'clock yet and I'm already annoying her.

"Well who put this in the jukebox?"

"Who do you think?" She motions toward a couple fools at the other end of the bar singing along with Afternoon Delight.

"I mean who allowed this to be in the juke?"

"Bob, I guess."

"Well, hell, what was he thinking?"

"Why don't you ask him when he comes in tomorrow? You know, once you pull yourself out of the gutter."

"I think I will," I mumble, defeated, as she fetches beer for the other alcoholics.

I watch her bubble ass swathed in designer denim and I can't help but feel marginally triumphant. This is the most she's talked to me since the Jolly Rancher incident."

"What about it, tough guy?"

That would be my buddy Paul sitting down on the empty stool to my left. He doesn't bother to change out of this navy blue monkeysuit before stopping at Bob's. His sleeves are streaked with grease and grime. His oily hair looks like the ass feathers of a duck that's been dunked in the toxic waters of Powderhorn Lake. He smells like Powderhorn Lake, too. An alarming combination of petroleum, detergent and rot.

Holly pours his draft and they smile coyly at each other. Just to piss me off. Tonight is beginning to seem identical to last night and the night before. I don't know. Maybe all I need to set me straight is a nice girlfriend for the night. Even a not-so-nice girl would do wonders at this point.

"I finally got the bill for that truck," Paul says.

Oh Christ. I've been hearing about this truck for the last two months. You can't talk to the man without him mentioning the accident a hundred and nine times.

"So..."

"Nine thousand dollars."

"I told you how limited my sympathy is. You shoulda got insurance like the rest of us law-abiding motorists."

"Law-abiding? Cops pull you over in that little piece of shit Chevette, license still suspended from all those DUIs, it's gonna be goodbye for a long time."

"It's not a Chevette, it's a Pontiac T-1000. A mechanic of your caliber should know the difference. And when was the last time you ever saw a cop pull over a Pontiac T-1000? Or a Chevette for that matter? Never. It doesn't happen. So long as I don't go making any left hand turns in front of Mrs. Brown's F10 pickup, I'll be fine."

That shuts him up a moment. He drinks his draft. I drink mine while the juke continues its country/disco rampage. The place is crowded for a Thursday evening. Mostly regulars. Chronic alcoholics and the boys coming in from the mills. There's a couple younger cats shooting pool, a couple older cats sliding ten spots into the poker machines.

"I can't get ahead," Paul begins round two. "Every time I think I'm getting it together, something else pops up. Five thousand dollars left on my tuition. Another five thousand in tools. Two thousand in credit cards. And now this truck. I'm twenty thousand dollars down and got nothing to show for it."

"You got that kick ass entertainment system."

"For a thousand bucks it can be your kick ass entertainment system."

"Thousand bucks? I don't even have enough money for gas. I might have to walk home tonight."

"Didn't you just get a check Tuesday?"

"Unemployment checks only go so far, Paul."

"Well, just be thankful you ain't got my bills. You'd probably have to get a job."

"Man, you know what I got to say about that? Fuck 'em and feed 'em to the fish. Declare bankruptcy," Paul says, exasperated. "They'll repo my tools. How would I work on cars? With my fingers? Besides, I'd like to keep my credit clean. I'd like to get a house, eventually."

"At the rate you're going, you'll end up living out of your two thousand dollar tool box."

"Yeah, anything else goes wrong. Way I figure, I keep drinking draft beer and bagging my lunch, I'll have everything paid off inside four years."

"Does this mean you won't be going to the Body Shoppe with the fellas tomorrow night?"

"Shit. I couldn't afford the cover charge. You?"

"You kidding? I'd hate for the girls to miss their car payments."

"I thought you said you were strapped for cash."

"Man, I always got money for strippers."

"Well, I got Carol. Saves money."

"I think I'd rather spend the cash."

"That was out of line."

"Maybe. How bout I buy you a beer to make up for it. Holly . . . two more of the same." I always feel generous on seventy-five cent draft night.

Paul asks if she could cash his check on account of the banks being closed. She happily complies. This pisses me off no end considering I've been frequenting this establishment four years and she won't even look at a check with my name anywhere on it.

"Listen, Vic, " Paul says as he slides the cash into his wallet. "I got an idea I want you to mull over. Remember I was telling you about that new job Carol started last week? At Am South Trust out on Route 30. You remember me telling you about that?"

"I don't know. Vaguely. Why?"

"What would you say, Vic, if I told you we could walk in and walk out, two minutes tops with at least seven thousand dollars between us, no problem."

"I'd say you've been watching too many Tarantino flicks."

"Seriously."

"Seriously? Seriously, I'd say you're a fucking idiot. You won't declare bankruptcy because you don't want to screw up your credit. Credit, which I might add, got you in trouble to begin with. But you're willing to risk going to jail for the next ten to twenty years, hard time. Federal prison time. Then, if you make it out alive, you'll have a criminal record to go along with your bad credit. Try getting a house with that. Or a job."

"We won't get caught."

"Yeah, you will. Remember that time you side-swiped that parked Cordova and you kept going? What'd you say? 'We won't get caught.' And that old man walking his terrier got your license plate number. Remember that?"

"What's that got to do with anything?"

"Everything. It's got everything you do with it. You couldn't even beat your meat without your mom catching you. Damn, Paul, you've come up with some stupid ideas before, but this one is like the Holy Grail of ignorance. That cheap beer's finally rotted the brain right out of your head."

"Listen for a second, will ya? I'm telling you this is low to no risk. Easy access, easy escape. Two expressways within a mile of the bank. Off ramps on those expressways a two minute drive in either direction. Cops come, they won't know where to look. We got a one hour window of



opportunity. I figure we just grab money in the drawers up front and get the hell out. Between five and six thousand dollars I figure."

"And Carol will just play along."

"Course not. She won't know nothing about it. First thing cops do after a robbery is question the employees. We do it on her day off."

"Security?"

"That's where the one hour window of opportunity comes into play. The guard always eats his lunch at BK. Twelve to one."

"And if he decides to bag his lunch?"

"He drives a gray Wrangler. We just make sure it's not in lot."

"And if his wife drops him off? And don't tell me he's single."

"I don't know if he's single or not."

"You know everything else. Did you interrogate Carol or what? Don't you think she'd be suspicious? You asking what vehicle the security guard drives. Jesus Christ."

"She ain't that quick on the uptake. You know that. Every piece of information I've come by has been here and there in different conversations. She volunteered most of it."

"She just up and told you what the security guard drives?"

"I'm a mechanic, Vic. Me asking what somebody drives is like you asking what kind of beer somebody drinks."

Holly swings by to refill our drafts and I ask her if she'd consider robbing a bank with Paul.

"I'd do a lot of things with Paul," she flirts carelessly.

Paul shakes his head, not even bothering to check out Holly's ass as she shags beers. "You know what kills me? These rich bastards who come in the garage. And you just know they've never had to work hard for what they have. Not like we work. Or at least how I work."

"Hey, I've held down jobs before. Manual labor like."

"These rich bastards don't even know how to change the oil in their Jaguars. They act like it's a major tragedy if the brakes squeak or the windshield wipers start leaving smears. The other day, this bitch comes in, telling me there's something wrong with the transmission in her Lexus. Yeah, there's something wrong with it; there ain't no transmission fluid in it. And the looks these people give me. Like I'm no better than dogshit. Like it pains them to stoop so low as to talk to a common mechanic. And you know where my money goes? To more rich bastards. So what if I want something back? I think I'm entitled."

"You're not going to talk me into doing this with you, Paul. Even if everything goes down like you say and we walk out with seven grand.

Divide that, you got thirty five hundred. What's that? Two months worth of bills for you? Then what? You wanna feel sorry for yourself, fine. Just don't include me in your criminal delusions."

"Feel sorry for myself? I'm not feeling sorry for myself. It may seem like that to you because you're content having nothing."

"Bullshit."

Then, from the jukebox, after two solid hours of country ditties and disco horrors, the opening guitar chord... John Fogarty laying down the truth.

"Wwwwwweeeelllllll you wake up in the morning..."

Yes! Yes!

The back door clangs open. Casually, I glance over my shoulder hoping to see a group of horny young ladies looking to take home a groovy cat such as myself. Maybe they'll intuitively know I'm the CCR fan like me all the more for my exquisite taste in music.

Instead, I see a husky guy wearing dark clothes and a ski mask. He carries a pump action shotgun like he's looking to use it. A moment later, the front door crashes open and another gunman enters waving a pistol. I don't get a very good look at him. I become very interested in my draft as if they won't shoot me if I'm looking at them. Paul does likewise.

"Show me the money, baby," the guy with the pistol tells Holly. I hear her rattling open a paper sack like the king I usually carry my six packs home in. Holly remains calm like she's done this sort of thing before.

"All right," shotgun announces. "We's gonna do this quick and fast. Put you wallets in the bag as I comes around. You don't say nothing you keeps yo eyes to the flo. Otherwise, I gots ta bust a cap in ya. Aw ight?"

No ones says anything. It occurs to me as I study my ratty boots that, though the robber tries his hardest to talk like a straight up gangsta, his voice doesn't sound black. In fact, his voice falls somewhere within the lily white range.

Not that it matters. An open trash bag is waved in my line of sight. I see a pair of Nikes, old and scuffed like my boots. No self-respecting black man would be caught dead in a pair of kicks that messed up.

I drop my empty wallet in his bag. Twenty dollars remaining secured in my right front pocket. I'm not going to miss my library card and I haven't had a license since last August.

Paul hesitates slightly before dumping his wallet. No one offers resistance. Not even tough guy Jack by the pool table who has repeatedly claimed to fear no man.

And then they're gone. Two minutes tops. Holly phones the police. Paul and I look at each other. Paul's left eye twitches.

"Drinks are on the house," Holly says as the patrons begin warily discussing what just occurred and CCR segues into Seger's Ramblin Gamblin Man.

Then Paul puts his face in his hands and the tears come.

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**Karl Koweski**



**Mountain  
View**

"Archie, look! It's Jesus! Jesus Christ! Get up, Archie. Jesus is right outside our window. I think he wants to tell me something."

Probably gonna tell you to lay off the hooch. The thought occurs to Archie but he keeps it to himself.

Garrety trembles with a combination of religious fervor and the good old fashioned dts.

"Archie! Get up! You don't want to miss Jesus."

Second day of rehab and this is what he has to deal with, a delusional room mate. He feels his own sickness squirming just below his skin. Archie pulls the covers to his chin as he did as a child when the bogeymen were extraneous. He feigns sleep.

Garrety looks like his face has been wiped down with gun oil. Eyes bulging like tumors, his lank hair hangs across his shiny forehead.

"Holy shit, Jesus, I knew you'd come. I knew you'd be here in my darkest hour. My garden of Yosemite."

Garrety stands before the room's sole window. There's only the moon, sickly yellow ringed with a pus-colored, pollution-induced halo.

Archie imagines a throng of white-suited thugs rushing in, swinging the rubber hoses indiscriminately.

"Hole on, Jesus, I'll take care of the goddam window."

Garrety grabs the back of the simple wood chair hunkered beneath the gouged and pitted desk separating their cots. He wrenches backward, taking two stumbling steps, empty-handed. Perhaps due to the Savior's frequent visits here at Mountain View Treatment Center, every piece of furniture is bolted to the floor.

"Jesus Christ, these people think of everything."

Archie expects him to fling himself against the Plexiglass next. Nothing would have pleased him more at the moment than to see Garrety bounce his melon off the window a few times. Garrety is one of those scrawny drunks. A couple precious inches north of five fee tall, maybe ten, twenty pounds over the century mark. He keeps his hair parted down the middle like a high school student. Skin red and leathery from passing out in the lawn chair in the summer and passing out on the tanning bed in the winter. Archie can't quite remember what Garrety said he did for a living. Supervision sounds right.

Garrety surprises him by giving up his chance to pal around with Jesus. He collapses on his Euchrist thin mattress, squalling, his sobs punctuated by a litany of "oh Jesuses".

Archie watches the drama form his cot. If I can just make it through the night without seeing Jesus, he thinks, I oughta be all right.



The next morning, Archie sits at the vanilla walnut desk separating his cot from Garrety's.

My name is Arthur Obcowski.

He reads the sentence he's just written with blue ball point pen across unlined stationery. He knows the next sentence he's expected to write is: I'm and alcoholic.

This is Mrs. Reba's idea. As a counselor here at Mountain View, she has all sorts of great ideas about breaking the cycle, exorcising personal demons, and the usual slush pile of medical jargon meant to simplify the task of knocking addiction off whatever list of problems each client harbors.

More than anything else, Archie dislikes the meetings. Not that he's shy. He's well aware of his easy way with people, a bar room politician if ever there was. He fails to see anything cathartic about discussing his short comings, his self loathing, with a bunch of jokers who only want to brag about how much booze they drank, how much coke they snorted, and all the fabulous possessions they have lost.

Mrs. Reba's answer is write what you're not willing to speak.

Last night Garrety thought he saw Jesus outside his window.

Archie smiles. This morning, Jesus forgotten, Garrety wanted to talk about the 2001 Blazer he drove before the repo man took it away. Garrety wanted to talk about the fine little brunette mistress his ex-wife somehow found out about before the prefix took effect.

Archie's sure Mrs. Reba has a clinical phrase to hang on this sort of boasting. Archie calls it the Rock Bottom Strut.

His pen hovers above the cheap paper. He could fill a page writing about those assholes. The braggarts and the broken-spirited men trading their sad stories like dog-eared baseball cards. Doubtful that's what Mrs. Reba has in mind, flecks of wood pulp pressed into the paper.

I've been married to Julie fourteen years. I have a thirteen year old son. His name is Vic. And a ten year old son. George.

And a daughter who would be about eighteen. His hand freezes. Jesus Christ. When was the last time he thought about her?

He couldn't recollect for certain what her name had been. Amanda. Cassandra. Miranda? Maybe Samantha. Damn. He'd never seen the baby and couldn't call forth a mental image of her mother, Joy. Joy: Two eyes, a nose, a mouth, red hair and a body he had enjoyed one drunken night.

He was thirty-eight years old at the birth of his son, Vic. He'd done a lot of living before that point. Julie knows nothing of his daughter. His sons know nothing about her. She is a ghost of a memory who will never solidify into a real live person. He had heard from someone who knew somebody

who thought the girl had died young. Cancer or car accident or some small catastrophe that had erased the mistake of her existence.

Mrs. Reba has requested complete disclosure. And though Mrs. Reba swore no other eyes would read his words, Archie can't shake the feeling the paper will somehow find its way into Julie's hands. He don't know why he never told her. She was likely dead before he ever met Julie. Some thought, fear, that he could no longer remember had held him back. Continues to hold him back.

He leaves out mentioning the girl with the name ending with "a" who may or may not be living.

Vic liked to find my mostly empty vodka pints stashed under the seat or in the glovebox of the station wagon and leave them out on the dashboard for me to find so that I'd know he knew. I think maybe the wife put him up to it.

He figures Mrs. Reba will enjoy this little tidbit. He has her pegged for a glutton for other people's misery.

Actually, this writing project is something Vic would get a kick out of, Archie thinks. Reading and writing horror stories are Vic's pastimes. He doesn't know how much talent the boy has. Being sensitive to criticism, Vic keeps his stories secreted like pints of vodka in the bottom of his desk drawer.

Archie remembers his casual remark when Vic, not much older than eight, had shown him a picture he'd drawn.

"Nobody stands like that. Heel to heel. Toes pointing in opposite directions."

The comment had sent the artist stomping away, the crudely drawn werewolf cradled to his chest.

The kid needs to toughen up. Be more like George, a boy who knows how to appreciate a good game of football. A kid as sensitive as Vic, the world will chew him up. And Vic's aversion to sports and fishing is downright alarming. When Julie found that Playboy under Vic's mattress, Archie wanted to cheer.

The kid could still be an asshole, though.

I was thirty-eight years old when Vic was born. Up to that point I hadn't worked a real job my whole life. I ran a book out of a tavern in Cal City back when El Taco ran things in Chicago. I made the choice to give it up when Vic was born. I didn't want my son to have a crook for a father.

Instead, Vic got a janitor for a father. It's a hard fact of life, the better factories, mills and plants hedging Northwestern Indiana are not and had never been clamoring to hire a forty year old man with no work record. He considered himself lucky he found a night time janitor position at Zayre, a job which finally led to the slightly more lucrative career flopping a mop at Marshall Medical.

The boys, he thinks, would have preferred a crook over a janitor, the green visor of a bookie less shameful than the navy blue monkey suit of a toilet cleaner.

Seeing the shame in their eyes is enough to make a man want to tip back a pint of three dollar vodka.

He lets the pen drop onto the pad. Eventually, he's going to have to give an account of the accident that landed him in Mountain View for twenty eight days of alcohol withdrawal. He cringes for the memory. How do you explain to a stranger that you drank a little too much on the job. That you passed out sitting on the toilet in the Cardiology bathroom and fell down, cracking a rib in the process.

He doesn't want to relive the pitying glances and baleful stares of the people he's worked with for close to a decade.

This is where he writes the testimonial. He's seen the error of his ways. He will never drink again.

Archie knows this to be bullshit. He'll have to be more cautious is all. More eyes will be watching.

"Hey, Archie. Your family's here. They're in the common room."

Archie jumps at the sound of the voice. Saul, the heavyset Mexican orderly who patrols the gleaming Mountain View halls during the day, crowds the doorway.

"Thanks, Saul."

"A good-looking family you got there. Boys looking like they want to play some ping pong. Want me to sign some paddles out for you?"

"Yeah and tell them I'll be right out."

"I can do that. But you might want to hurry your roll. Visitation's only half an hour."

"I hear you."

Archie hides the paper in the desk drawer away from Garrety's prying eyes. A jolt of guilt brings tears to his eyes. It's not the sort of guilt he can explain away or write out of his system. The only means he's ever known to compartmentalize the guilt courtesy of Smirnoff.

He swipes a sleeve across his face. Not a moment's gone by these last weeks he hasn't wanted to embrace his wife and sons. Apologize for every

wrong he's committed. Apologize for watching George's little league ball games from the station wagon where he thought no one would notice him take nips for the pint. And Julie...

A half hour.

The thought of looking into their eyes, seeing his failures reflected, paralyzes him.

He wants a happy ending to hang on the few loose sentences of his life.

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# **Emerson Dameron**



## **The Pal**



Euclid wasn't the sort of man to give a fuck about your microscopic problems or mundane sense of dissatisfaction. Rather: He was the sort of man that took great care to APPEAR to care about you. He was priest, psychoanalyst, handyman, mechanic, creative consultant, philosopher, buddy and all around nuisance to anyone about. And knew it. And defined himself as such.

How are you? How you been? Where you been? Doin' all right? What's happenin'? Still at it? Euclid wanted to know. He never hounded you, though. If you were busy, it was all good. You knew he'd be around when you started to weaken.

Euclid saw things through an overhead surveillance system that played back, again and again, his every kind word and display of support. He saw your annoyed disdain ripen to grateful warmth as he comforted you. That made all his bullshit worthwhile.

You'll always remember Euclid. You'll miss him when he cashes in. You'll be interviewed for the documentary in Euclid's head, a collection of testimonials from all those he touched, those that will ache the most when he finally kicked it. A heartrending display of one man's potent benevolence. Almost made him want to die sometimes.

# **Emerson Dameron**



## **The Crystal Cannonball**

Only one form of mass transit pays for itself. So, for all the obvious reasons, the city is phasing out everything save the Crystal Cannonball, the cross-town roller coaster. This state-of-the-art thrill ride chugs up to a stop near you every twenty minutes, and although they're still working out a few glitches, the commute never seems to drag.

Despite the Cannonball's enormous popularity and bang-up receipts, some riders haven't quite acclimated. Cleanup detail causes negligible delays, but that's better than letting the puke sit there. Particularly during July and August, it's worth playing a few extra rounds of hand-held Tetris on the platform while personnel scrubs things down. Once everyone's built a little character, it won't be as much of a problem.

After a brief spike late in the previous decade, coffee consumption in the city has leveled off. The Cannonball gets the ol' inner war flaming much more theatrically. 'Tis good to scream bloody homicide first thing in the morning and again in the evening, don't cha know. Eight hours of looking busy ain't so humiliating when bookended by righteous catharsis. Celebrating the feral essence out of necessity is celebration nonetheless. In this town, you have to be an asshole to drive a car. Why not take a seat and feel the wind in your hair? The season pass keeps you barreling daily. New lines are under construction now

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**Emerson  
Dameron**



**You'll Never  
get out of this  
World Alive**

Mommy caught a bug. It wasn't really the fault of the person who "gave" her the bug. That person could've been more considerate – could've quarantined himself, or at least not injected Mommy with his infected mucous – but Mommy could've been more careful, too. Won't do any good to blame anyone. Now all that matters is that Mommy got sick. Mommy got very sick indeed, so sick that the docs had to cut her open to pull the disease out of her belly.

And here you are.

A long-term condition like you bleeds a lot of money from Mommy. Unlike a lot of people, Mommy wasn't born into obscene amounts of cash, so she has to get out and bust her ass to tend to you. She works the night shift at a seedy diner where the scumbag customers hit on her and then stiff her for the tip. She gets fired, then works at the cackle factory a few exits down the interstate, where she's propositioned by swaying, piss-scented troglodytes and born defectives. She quits. Her experience scores her a job in an old folk's home, where she swabs octogenarian assholes, grits her teeth, and spends her paycheck on food for you, the bug that wouldn't stop growing, that she couldn't kill with a gallon of bleach.

But now Mommy has no job. Late last year, a lot of people realized they didn't actually NEED all those goods and services, that they could go cold turkey on a lot of small pleasures and, after enduring a short withdrawal period, save a lot of dough. Sadly, Mommy can't save any money if she's not making any money, which she's not, because no one has enough money to share with her, even if she's willing to do practically any work short of sucking cock.

Mommy had a job interview today. You don't think she got it. You sidestep a pounding by not venturing home just yet. You could use some fresh air. You and Kevin ride down to the lake, high off some weed that smelled like it may as well have been yard clippings soaked in bongwater. Kevin's got some chick riding shotgun. She's missing a tooth, and all that eye shadow makes her look like a raccoon. The three of you park the car in tall weeds and saunter down to an old shed by the water. Kevin spraypaints a black swastika on its side. You make a lame crack about ancient peace symbols. You're inappropriately clever when stoned.

"Is that really what it means?" raccoon girl asks you. "Cause somebody drew one on me when I was passed out." She pulls up her pants leg to disclose a smaller swastika sketched on her calf with a Sharpie. Kevin snickers.



**Emerson  
Dameron**



**Lounge Lizard  
King**

Cermak Gomillion. Lounge Lizard King. Please, take my card. Spell the name right. One "C" in Cermak. One "C" total, 'smatterafact.

You know when you cut off a lizard's tail, it grows back good as new? Same thing with a lounge lizard's dick. It's true. Little known fact about me. When someone hacks off the quartermaster, it grows back just a tad longer and just a tad stronger than before.

'Course, I didn't always know this. I learned it the only way you really learn anything: Experience. Funny story.

I was rock-and-rolling with a barfly I picked up at Wentworth's. Annie? Can't remember her name. All I remember is she was some fine dish delish. She had the brand of lush body that knocks your boy Cermak's knees ten times outta ten, with a face like a gorgeous old standard. Too damn hot not to fuck her 'til she screamed in tongues and then stick Ol' One Eye in her mouth just to shut her up. I'd knocked back a few, but I wasn't plowed, just too glossed over to mind my language. Well, she was lathering me up when I blurted something out. Lost to me now. So it goes. You've have gotten a chuckle out of it. But Annie – what's her name – didn't. She bit down like a steel trap. Teeth hit the skin and kept right on going like General MacArthur. She ripped the bugler right off and gulped it down whole. Then her eyes rolled back in her head like she'd taken a shot of China white. Passed out cold.

Ain't that a bitch?

I'd seen this kind of scene before, so I let the tart snooze. I poured witch hazel on my crotch and used cotton to stop the bleeding. Wasn't as bad as you're thinking. Scabbed over pretty quick. But what to do about getting Danny Boy back? Syrup of Ipecac? Didn't seem right, but what alternatives did I have? Yeah, I was in a pickle, and that ain't a clever nickname for my cock.

I called in sick from work. By noon, the inspector sprouted right back up. In an hour, it was it's old self again. But I wasn't so good. I took a nap. When I woke up, the quail was off with the wind, the colonel was at attention and it was five minutes 'til Happy Hour.

Patience was the only thing that saved me. Oh, I could've dropped several THOUSAND frogskins getting some other joe's cock grafted on, but I stayed cool. And the big guy sprouted right out of my crotch, none the worse for wear. "What the fuck's for breakfast?"

See, I got a philosophy. An all-fronts philosophy, which seems like too much to ask of most of you so-called brains these days. Serves you in any situation. "Take it easy." When I say that, it ain't an empty salutation. I'm reminding you how things are done, padre. Do it the easy way. Work

smarter. If it can't be done the easy way, it upsets the balance of nature to do it at all.



**Like What you just read? Want to read more? Cathedral #2 will be out in January. It'll be two bucks or trade or a nice letter.**

**As you can see, I'm not the best at designing zines yet, so if you have any advice, e-mail me at [Kathychaser@hotmail.com](mailto:Kathychaser@hotmail.com) or snail mail me. Tell me what you thought about how the zine looks. I'm never going to have many graphics, if any, because there's really no need for them in a litzine where the words should stand alone. Even so, maybe some pictures or something?**

**I'm probably going to have a small picture gallery in the next issue anyway, with some pictures from the Cullen Carter Benefit fund (Go to [www.ashabot.com](http://www.ashabot.com) for more info if you're reading this before August 3<sup>rd</sup>).**

**Also, I really want this zine to be about creating a community of writers. Please send me a couple of pieces to read, even if you've never been published before. You never know. Please also send me comments on my short stories. What did you think? Negative feedback often helps more than a glowing, positive review of a writer's work. I'm genuinely curious to know what my reader's think and what I might be able to do to make my work better. This ain't the New Yorker, folks. There are no egos here. Seriously.**

**Yes, the name Cathedral does come from the title of a Raymond Carver short story but it means much more to me. Whether reading or writing them, words are sacred to me. They are the place where I worship.**

**Kind of related to this: A quote. David Darling, in his book, Zen Physics, wrote "Zen uses language to point beyond language." Of course this is also true with good writing. We write for love. We write for worship.**