

Robin Yourgrave



BIRD TWO
ISSUE SHIT

Two Bucks

Hey kids -

Welcome to Bird Shit
issue 2. I did things a
little differently this time
around, but only slightly.

The titles of the stories
are still song titles that I
jacked from people more
creative than myself. The
subject matter is a bit more
light-hearted than issue one,
the main players are still
mostly the same, and I still
smoke too much. With that
said, enjoy. Tell your friends,
& if you want more copies my
e-mail is robin.yourgrave@
gmail.com.

Much love,

Robin Yourgrave.

Dead and Broken

School started back up and I was dealing with not having a car. In almost any other big city this would be no big deal, but in a town like Fort Wayne, Indiana, to some this could mean the end of the world. I did what I could to make the best of it and in my case, this meant not knowing where I was going to lay my head on any given night.

My parents lived about a half hour to forty five minutes from any place I needed to be. This was cause for me to couch surf from place to place in the middle of town. I wasn't depressed about it. Honestly, I welcomed the adventure. Here I was with nothing more than a back pack full of clothes with no clue how I was going to get from one place to the next, resting my head on anyone's couch who would tolerate me. I know that a life like this isn't for everybody, but I in a sense feel like I was cut out for it.

Around this time Dean was going through a similar situation. He and his ex had a place together and upon breaking up, he moved out; surrendering him to living out of his car. If you were an outsider to our situation, it was kind of sad. At the same time, though, our friends saw it as a connection that two people found at just the right time.

So there we were, spending our days at work and in my case, school as well, trying to set in stone a place to dream. Winner and Amber now were, other than Dean, two of the only people who actually came through for me. They saw my situation and accepted that there was nothing I could do about it. My insurance didn't cover hit and runs, and I was owed a sum of money for school expenses, none of which I had seen yet. I didn't make enough money to be able to take out a car loan and I was busy paying off other debts, leaving me with the inability to save up any money. I was fucked.

My dad felt the necessity to make accusations toward

me, even after seeing the police report of the incident. Because of my alcohol problems last summer, he was convinced that it wasn't a hit and run that rendered me on foot, it was me drinking and driving. He couldn't rest with the possibility that maybe, just maybe, I was telling the truth.

So, I pressed on. Dean pressed on. My friends pressed on. I was getting where I needed to go and always had a place to sleep and food in my stomach. Honestly, I have learned more from not having a car than I ever could have learned had I gone on in the same way that I was. I always worried about when my car was going to leave me stranded. I shelled out countless dollars gassing the fucker up and maintaining my insurance. That vehicle was the reason for my debt. Not having it kept food in my stomach and smoke in my lungs.

Given Dean's situation too, I couldn't imagine a better way to forge a new relationship. We hadn't been dating for long but our being homeless at the same time gave us a chance to see the two of us tap resources both separately and together. I was worried that getting such a shitty foreshadowing of 2010 was going to wrongly shape my attitude on everything, but all of the events happened as they should. I wouldn't have wanted to do anything differently or spend it with anybody else. I was right where I needed to be when I needed to be there and with who I needed to be there.

I hadn't been back over to my house in weeks. I had forgotten what it felt like to sleep in a bed and had been accustomed to the handful of dirty clothes that I'd been wearing for the last month. I smelled terribly and for that reason alone was surprised that I still had friends who would let me couch at their home without putting a plastic sheet down first.

I still managed to grasp my sanity each day. I was doing well in school, no matter how burned out I actually was. My heart wasn't in my studies at all but somehow I still found it in me to work as hard as I had time to at it.

Not only was school flaring up, work was too, and I was writing more than ever. Having Dean a cement figure in my life left me at wits to create more so than I had in a while.

I had a meeting with my publisher at the paper. We did this from time to time not only to discuss where my column was going but also to catch up in general. He told me that day that he was putting me up for an award for best long-running column and that in the last two months my writing had vastly improved. He looked me directly in the eyes and said, "Whatever has changed in your life to bring this on, don't let it go. You're on to something."

Obviously, the first thing that I thought of was Dean. Too, though, the whole scheme of events that befell the end of 2009 could lend cause to all of it. I give credit to a combination of both.

C/O Amber

A typical Monday evening. Everybody is doing their own thing, studying various things, but we're all united by the process, drinking coffee, smoke breaks, reveling in the differences, and brought together by them. I've been relegated to the floor, thinking about how to combine death and chocolate into a meaningful research topic. Useless. I'll have my Eureka moment later. Going back to being on the floor.

We have enough seating for a small army, so why am I sitting on the floor? Because Zim is taking up one whole couch with his homework and Winner is taking up another with laundry. Robin is taking up a third with whatever writing project is striking her fancy. I'm thinking in French now, about death and chocolate. Really, I'm getting nowhere. Suddenly, I get a whiff of the most god-awful thing I've ever had the misfortune to smell. It made me glad that my typical overbearingly obnoxious allergies had previously prevented me

from this noxious odor. It hit my nose like a punch of sour milk and dead skunk.

I discreetly sniffed myself, relieved when the malodorous scent didn't increase in intensity. I then proceeded to look around, searching for a cereal bowl that had been forgotten. Finally, Winner noticed something was wrong, and asked me about it.

"I'm looking for the source of this god-awful smell," I said. I literally thought that something had gotten into the house and died. She responded with, "It's not me, I'm wearing socks."

I looked at her, and that's when I realized that Robin's feet had somehow shifted to dangle above my shoulder. I took a sniff, and had to resist the urge to vomit. I could not believe that that smell could come from feet.

See, my feet don't stink. That's not the same as saying my shit doesn't stink. It does. Just as much as everybody else's, sometimes more. What I'm saying is that I have a general preference for socks. I *like* wearing socks. So I've never experienced the intense, permeating scent that wearing—and sweating in—shoes worn without socks, day in and day out, can create. Didn't even know it was possible.

Needless to say, a smoke break was required after that particular revelation. Robin is comfortable with her body odor. I am not. It's something that I'm still growing accustomed to. Fortunately, Robin's showers have increased in frequency over the past several months. Nothing to do with changing sensibilities, but the preceding months have been filled with Dean. Something about relationships changes hygiene. Her feet still stink though.

FUCK YOU, Aurora

I wasn't around at my parents' house anymore. The whole not having a car thing kind of got in the way of that and, well, shit happens. Unfortunately though, some things never change.

Goiter Cakes and I never really got along. She is two and a half years my junior and a completely different person than myself. While I was spending so much time away, she deemed it a golden opportunity to try to fuck up me and my dad's relationship.

My entire life I looked at my dad as one of my best friends. For the longest time he was my only friend and the person who knew me best; who understood. Something always told me, though, that Goiter was jealous.

Since I had become somewhat of a drifter, stops back at my house were very few and far between. I hadn't been there in quite some time and one afternoon I got a text from Goiter that read, "You better call dad. He's about to throw out all your stuff."

I called the house right away to see what was up and nobody answered. I told Goiter this and she started feeding me lines about what my dad had allegedly been saying about me. Remarks about my drinking were thrown around. He apparently said that if I was to be so irresponsible and such a lousy drunk as to drive drunk and wreck my car, then why should he help me in any way? Goiter Cakes clearly said that my dad wanted me out. Permanently.

I was devastated, especially since I had tried to call and nobody would answer. I felt like I had lost my family. What I didn't consider at the time was the fact that my sister had a

tendency to skew things to an almost dangerous level. I don't know why I was so quick to believe her, but I did and my state of panic didn't leave me for days.

About a week went by and my dad finally called me. I asked him about everything that Goiter Cakes had said save for the remark about throwing my stuff out (which was entirely in jest), and my dad had said none of those things. To initiate more insult, she had been making up stories about me as well. She made it sound like my relationship with my dad had gone entirely toxic and things wouldn't be the same between us ever again.

That Sunday I went over to my dad's after several weeks of missing him terribly and we vented our frustrations about the third party of false communication. What my dad was more baffled about was the fact that I actually believed the shit that Goiter had to say. My dad hadn't said any of it.

I didn't feel immature for coming to the abrupt conclusion that I had, but I wrote her off entirely for a while. It would be the last time that I let her interfere with my life and my heart, and I wasn't willing to put my mental and emotional well-being at risk again. I talked it over not only with dad and Allie, but also with Dean, Winner, Amber, and others. It was the only thing that made sense given Goiter's lack of understanding of emotion and the human condition. There are just certain lines that people shouldn't cross. This was one of them.

Hold Me Tight

Dean and I had been seeing a lot of each other, especially given our circumstances. It seemed like each day we found something else that we had in common, and it also seemed like I felt like half a person without him.

The day that all the shit went down with my sister he was the first person that I called, ringing out my distress nearly with tears. He actually cared about what I had to say and understood why I was so damn upset about everything.

School was now in full swing, barrels of homework getting dropped on my lap and keeping me from reading and writing at my own volition. I was draining myself, letting my consciousness dull with the monotony that perpetually ensued.

Dean usually worked Monday and Wednesday nights at Side Pocket so those were the nights that I set aside to do the majority of my homework. Tuesdays and Thursdays were reserved for him. When we would have to go more than a day and a half without seeing each other it was torture. It still is.

I found that this emptiness befell me when he wasn't around, like I couldn't even see myself clearly. It wasn't like I was dependent on him or couldn't take care of myself or that I was clingy; it was simply feeling like a half. Like something very vital from the big equation was absent.

He was just as empty as I was when we were apart. There were nights that all we wanted was to be in the presence of the other and he, after working a sixteen hour day or greater, would come over to Winner and Amber's for the one purpose of sharing a couch with me. It was the first time that I really felt my presence was appreciated by a significant other.

Hearts of Stone

Dean had decided to get a place after the greater part of a month or more was spent drifting. I still wasn't ready to surrender my drifting status and still hadn't for a while, but it was reassuring to know that I would have another place to rest my head and, possibly, shower.

He got a deal at a place near campus; a decent place with employee discounts bode well for him and seeing how all of his belongings can fit into his car, the moving process was not a daunting task.

I enjoy the fact that material possessions do not mark his happiness. All of mine had been stripped away from me and I got along just fine. If anything it was a sense of relief to not be the owner of all these things. Material just ends up being a burden. When I was planning on moving to Denver, the largest complication that I came across was the fact that at the time I had so much useless shit. It was going to cost almost a grand to get all of my stuff to its destination. This is no way to live. I'm happy to say now that the majority of the stuff that I need can be shoved into a bag and strapped to my back on any given day.

He picked me up from work that night and I promised to help him unpack everything, which wasn't much. For a while he had been rolling around with nearly a full stocked bar in his trunk so we indulged in some of those niceties while unpacking.

What could have taken an hour ended up taking several. We talked about his favorite bands and why they were such. We talked more about our pasts, we told stories, we laughed, and drifted through beer cans. I didn't think that it was possible to have that much fun unpacking, but it was. He went through old boxes and compiled a special 'burn away 2009 box' full of old pictures, letters, bills, patches and more of the like. The first campfire of the year he was going to destroy those artifacts. Really, 2009 deserves none else than to be turned to smoke entirely.

We continued unpacking and when we finally had everything put away, we realized that it was past four in the morning. We hadn't checked the time at all but it wasn't something that mattered to us. Hell, between Christmas eve, Christmas day, and the day after I got maybe six hours of sleep.

And that's being generous. We cared more about being with each other than sleep any day, and this simple fact rang clear that we were more than perfect for each other; we were soul mates.

Born to Paint

February was approaching and even though in number of days it is the shortest month of the year, it always felt like the longest to me. I loathed Valentine's day, the weather was always the coldest, snowiest, and most dismal. Smiles were usually frowns and flesh was usually dry and chapped. By the time February rolls around, Indiana residents have usually forgotten what the sun looks like and have almost accepted that the weather was going to be this way forever.

This year, though, I didn't fall into that trap. Dean's birthday was later in the month and we were getting ready to go to Portland in March. Also, I had other plans in mind.

At the end of January, right after Dean had moved in, I made plans to give him the best birthday present that anyone could possibly give or get. The night we unpacked his belongings he showed me a graphic from the Latterman album "No Matter Where We Go" and talked about what the band meant to him. As soon as he said that I knew what I had to do.

I stole the album from his collection and took it to Josh Angel at Cardinal who, oddly enough, was the tattoo artist for the both of us. I gave the image to Josh, told him that it was a birthday surprise, and we set up the appointment for the week before his birthday. Dean had no idea what was happening but I made a valiant effort to make sure that all his friends did.

The days passed and on the eleventh Dean and I were going to Indianapolis to see Lucero. It was our first road trip together and our first show together, as a couple that is. We

went, did our best to enjoy the show and have a killer time, but apparently we didn't fit the desired clientele of the venue and were kicked out near the end of the set.

The next few days went by and I spent them hanging the birthday surprise directly over Dean's head. He had some surprises up his sleeve for me too. Valentine's Day rolled around which was three days before the birthday surprise was going to happen and I wasn't expecting anything. I had made my disdain for the holiday abundantly clear so I wouldn't have been mad if I didn't get a thing. But, in the Dean tradition, he had to do something special.

He worked all day and I was off, so I spent the time writing at his apartment. I was productive for the most part, only falling victim to the Super Nintendo on seldom occasions. He had shot me warnings all day about how what he was doing for me was going to be both the cutest and most angering thing that anyone had ever done for me.

I waited with anticipation until he got back from work. The first of the gifts was a box of moon pies for which I had feverishly been searching. I was excited as hell and my ass which would assuredly double in size was excited as well. The second of the gifts was a John Lennon t-shirt which I had never seen before, and my love for that man is well known. The third, though, was the single most adorable disgusting piece of poetry I'd ever read.

♡ Flowers are overrated and fancy chocolates are kinda, too. Instead of all of that crap, here's a poem from me to you. You quench my thirst for love better than any shitty drinky, even if your tootsies are a little stinky. I feel like a widdle baby when I'm wrapped safely in your arms. I only want the best for you and will keep you safe from harm. I can't wait for the summer when we'll loudly blast our songs. We'll get sunburnt together and wear our protest tongs. So, I'm offering you my heart as best I can. Just say "yass" and I'll puddin' yer hand. Tutup and take thum time before you kick my ass too bad because I really like you and that would make me really thad. I'll leave you with this Valentine's poem from me to only you. Love, your little zippermuffin,

Deany Deany Doo



I wanted to kiss him and kill him both at the same time, but it was thoughtful and hilarious. I'd found myself a winner.

I hadn't bought him anything to exchange on v-day, but I figured that the event lined up for Tuesday would be more than enough to make up for my gift exchange shortcomings. Dean had bought foodstuffs to take over and cook at Jake's place that night. We got into the car and started driving and

after we pulled into Jake's apartment complex, Dean and I noticed how entrancing the sunset was and he turned down the music and looked at me.

"I had Springsteen paint that sunset for you," he said.

I stopped, staring at him in shock. He continued.

"You see what I did there? I switched out god with Springsteen."

"Yeah, I got it," I said, the appalled senses ringing through my voice.

"See," he continued, "'Born To Run' wasn't the original title for that album. Bruce Springsteen was painting one day and decided that he wanted to call the album 'Born To Paint.' When he pitched it to his producers, they told him that he can't just appeal to the pretentious indie rock kids who like to paint all the time. So, Springsteen in tears got up and said, 'Nobody understands me! I'm just gonna run away!' After he said that, the producers stopped and said, 'We got it.' And that's how 'Born To Run' got its name."

I was in such shock that I was barely able to speak. I held in my laughter as to not encourage him further, but good god...really dude?

My Bedroom is like... For Artists

I had class from one thirty to seven twenty on Tuesdays but I had no problem with cutting out of my five thirty class early. I had good attendance thus far so I didn't really care, especially today. It was the day that Dean was getting his birthday surprise.

He got off work at six and I told him to haul ass getting to campus. His appointment was for six thirty so I wanted to

try my absolute hardest not to be late. I left class and he rolled up to the building shortly thereafter. He got out of the car and I seated myself in the drivers seat; the first time I had the privilege of sitting in such a seat since December twenty third. I was prepared with a blindfold because I had every intention of making this an adventure for him. I didn't want him to have any sort of sense of direction, I didn't want him to know what part of town we were headed to and I was banking on him shitting himself.

We pulled up to Cardinal tattoo, Dean still blindfolded and clueless as to where we were, and I parked. We had time to smoke a cigarette before going in. I had to light it for him and keep him regularly updated on the burn status of his smoke due to his blindfolded state. We finished smoking and I locked up, taking his hand as we started walking.

The sidewalks were paved with water and ice, sparingly snow where they forgot to shovel. The streetlights were reflecting off of every wet surface in sight, stripes of green scattered about the asphalt. My excitement was nearly unbearable, Dean's was too. It was more of the cluelessness that had me excited, I think. I forgot that there was a small step in front of the doorway and Dean almost tripped. Oops.

We walked in and everyone in the shop stopped and stared, Josh Angel directly in front of me with a shit-eating grin on his face. I peeled the bandana off of Dean's face and he just stalled, looking around the parlor without a clue.

"What's going on?" Dean asked.

"You're getting tattooed today," said Angel, still smiling from ear to ear.

"Oh, really?!" said Dean, "What am I getting tattooed?"

Angel left the room to go get the stencil he had drawn up. While Dean stood with me in shock, repeating over and over again, 'holy shit, holy shit, holy shit.' Angel returned with the stencil and it even exceeded my expectations. I was expecting four inches at the most, given the image he had to go

from. It was huge. It was originally a piece planned to go on the back of Dean's arm, but there was no way this one was going to fit. Dean didn't know what to say at this point, he was shocked and giddy and jubilant all at the same time.

We waited around for a while and eventually Jake and Dayla showed up to be there for the surprise. The group of us hung out at the shop while Dean was adorned with ink. It made me happy to see him so happy.

Jake and Dayla left before the tattoo was complete but I was more than happy that they showed up for the event. It solidified to me what Dean meant to the two of them and what the two of them meant to Dean. He truly had friends that could make a meaningless town worthwhile.

His tattoo was done and I had never felt more in love with him up until this point. When I give gifts, I like them to be memorable. If they aren't, there's really no point in giving a gift at all.

I'm Comin' Home

The week of Dean's birthday his best friend Michull was coming into town from Portland, Oregon. The plan was to spend as much time together as possible and to down as many drinks in the process. This wasn't a problem for us.

It was the first time that I would get to hang out with Michull, barring our less than admirable introduction several months prior. At least summer '09 didn't entirely destroy every impression on everyone. Alas, I was excited to see him on an occasion lacking my ardent drunken debauchery.

I was at school and Dean picked me up after. We went over to Michull's parents house before we struck gatherings. We had a party that night both for Dean's birthday and a warm welcome for Michull's return to Fort Wayne. Stories that Dean

had told me about years passed really reminded me of all of the hard times that I had with my friends. The issues weren't aligned with his though. My problem was that I always had such a difficult time forming bonds and keeping them. I wasn't friendless for the majority of my life; this was far from the truth. I honestly think it's a guy thing. Guys find friends much easier for the simple fact that in male relationships there is far less backstabbing involved. Maybe I'm wrong and all along I just fucked things up for myself.

At any account though, I was excited to see boyhood bravery cross into adulthood. From what it sounded like, Michull had been doing very well in Portland. I was exceedingly curious about his transition stories because I knew that I wanted to jump ship in a soon kind of way.

Dean and I were set to travel to Portland for a visit about two weeks after Michull came to town. The week that Michull was there I was refreshed to find out that he liked me and was happy for the fact that Dean had found me. Both Dean and myself had spent a fair amount of time fucking around and we both finally realized what was wrong with our actions. We were happy now, though. Our friends could see that.

The week itself exuded coffee and smoke stained teeth, more so than usual. The whiskey bottles on the first night were nearly emptied and friends were never in small dosage. It was a great joy to witness a love like that. So pure, so unadulterated, so...ageless. I had envy, sure, but then I reminded myself about the friendships I had forged in the time surrounding the last few months. Without realizing it, I too had become one of the lucky ones.

The week ended and Michull left. We weren't too saddened by it all just because we knew that we would be seeing him again in a very short amount of time. We were about to add another tally to our traveling repertoire. There wasn't anything more that I loved than traveling with Dean no

matter how great or small the distance. We were together, stepping out of our comfort zones and, in a sense, this was what we were comfortable doing.

The Last Good Thing I ever saw c/o Cinnamon

I'll never forget the summer of 2009. Me, Robin, and some dude whose name I can't think of for the life of me went to the infamous Warped Tour. It was a day of firsts for some and bittersweet returns for others. I was in the firsts group. This being my first time there, I was a little lost, but at the same time in awe of what I was witnessing.

I had seen some bands play on small stages, but never anything to this caliber. But I had the best tour guide to lead us around and show us the true beauty of the event. I never will forget that day and the memories made, not only throughout the duration of the day, but the drives there and back. I was the only one awake on the way home and all I remember is Robin in my passenger seat passed out cold and the dude in the back seat sawing logs. Luckily I was listening to music and smoking cigs.

The following October we took another road trip to Chicago. It's one of my most memorable road trips. Me, Robin, and Jordan all headed from Fort Wayne to Chicago. It was another trip of firsts. Robin and I had been a million times but it was Jordan's first Chicago trip so we made it as fun as we could. We went to Millennium Park to check out the infamous bean. I'm not sure of its meaning, but it's probably

one of the coolest things I've ever seen.

Since we had until seven for our Brand New and Manchester Orchestra show, we did what every other tourist did and walked down Michigan Avenue and made our way around the beautiful city. For some time we were walking around streets lined with sports cars and super nice apartments. Of course by this time it was raining and we couldn't do anything about it so we kept on trekking on.

Before we knew it we had to catch the train and head over to the Aragon Ballroom where we would see the show. The night just couldn't get any better. After the show we walked around looking for a place to drain our bladders and we decided to just take the train back to Chinatown and stop somewhere on the way home. So began our three hour trip back to Fort Wayne. I drove the whole way and Robin had a Heavens CD with her so I smoked cigarette after cigarette and threw in a Black & Mild and on I drove. If you're guessing I was the only one awake well then you're right, but you still don't get a prize. Once back in Fort Wayne we dropped Jordan off and headed back to Robin's to pass out and call it a night.

It's memories like these that last a lifetime and we will never forget all of the fun shared by all.

Navigating The Windward Passage

February was drawing its ugly head to a close and I was ready to move on with my life. School was swinging back and forth, as usual, and I was yet again losing sleep trying to keep up.

I was still couch surfing, mainly staying at Dean's place and at Winner and Amber's. I was used to the fact that I rarely

saw my family. It was something that happened at an almost natural progression. It didn't take really any getting used to on my part, it was just something that sort of happened, I guess.

I couldn't have been happier that spring break was very quickly approaching. Everything got incredibly overwhelming without my realizing it. When I finally did realize what was going on around me, my brain did its own step backward and peered at everything with storm clouds looming overhead.

I made it through, I pressed on. Before I knew it, Dean and I were on the road to the airport to leave for Portland. I was excited to be able to ease myself at least for a little while. Hell, even if it was only a week it was something. I would be surrounded by good people in a new environment with an open book, leaving behind my Fort Wayne responsibilities. Sometimes all it takes is an escape.

It seemed like the second I entered the airport that Indiana was washed away. I think it had something to do with the fact that I knew my head would be rested elsewhere that very night. It's an odd concept to grasp, traveling. It's comfortable and relaxing but at the same time busy and altering. It's not a system of abandonment, but it's close. Why do people seem to need the time for escape? It's because they are looking for something better than what they have in their typical environment. That's what I've found, anyway.

We boarded the plane and we were off, leaving town. I didn't tell many people that I was going to be gone. I briefly mentioned to my mom that I was going away but the majority of my family and social units didn't know. I just wanted to disappear, so I did.

Our layover was a three hour excursion in Denver. Thankfully Denver is one of the only airports in the US that still has a smoking lounge. We found it and chain smoked, drinking \$6.50 pints of shock top while overlooking the Rocky Mountains. It was 8 a.m. Denver time, but that was of no concern to us. We had to kill time somehow.

Eventually we boarded our next plane and three hours later we were in Portland with everyone. The weather was beautiful and for whatever reason, I knew that something was changing very abruptly. I kept thinking about Fort Wayne and the city and its smells and the faces; faces that I had seen everyday for however long. Then something clicked. I could not picture my life in Fort Wayne for another year. It was dirt, it was filth, it was the sick smell of fermenting vomit outside of a bar after New Year's Eve. I was itching to get out, but I had no idea where I was going to end up.

That Tuesday we went up to Seattle to do some exploring. We had no particular agenda; none of us had really been there save for Michull and Maggie attending a show which didn't really allow them the time to explore. This was our day to do this.

We wandered around for the greater part of the day and decided to find a bar and grab a drink. We wound up at this dive bar with a giant, terrifying clown head mounted atop the building. The banner on the side of the building screamed one-dollar PBRs so, naturally we were in.

We dinked around the bar for a while and went out back for a smoke. We looked up and realized that we were drinking underneath the Space Needle. We marveled in its presence and glow then went back in. Maggie, Flounder, and Dean were over in the pool table area and Michull and I were seated at a booth talking. I was asking him about his initial decision to move, prying the elements and events surrounding the act. He started asking me questions about why I was still in Fort Wayne. Eventually the conversation progressed into what it would take on my part to move to Portland.

I had a few debts to pay off and I'd have to find a job in Portland, but the main problem was school. There was no way in hell I was going to be able to afford paying out of state tuition. At the same time, though, I started to think about school and all of the ways in which it had been inhibiting me. I

had no time to read what I wanted to read, no time to write about what I wanted to write about, and no time to allow myself the piece of mind that I needed. With all of these factors in mind, I came to the realization that taking a year off wasn't such a bad idea. Shit, at IPFW I had been settling all three years I had been there. I didn't want to be a media and public communication major. I didn't want to be attending a school that any bastard who cheated their way through high school could get accepted to. I wanted to excel, as a journalism major in a large city and have to work for a degree that I wanted. So, then and there, I decided within myself that I was going to move to Portland, wait a year to get my residency, and re-enroll in 2011.

I worded my epiphany to Michull and he stopped, wide-eyed and said, "Don't say it unless you mean it. Don't say it unless you fucking mean it."

"I mean it, dude," I said, "I need out of that fucking black hole."

The five of us went back outside and I revealed my discovered notions to Dean and he was right there with me.

"Let's move to fucking Portland," I said to him.

"Let's fucking do it," he said. And it was decided. By summer we would be gone.

The next day Dean and I spent most of the morning fleshing out plans. He hadn't told anyone the news but I called Winner, she was the only one. I told a few people the next day and decided not to tell family until we got back into town and had a better idea about when we would be taking off. I think this was a wise decision. I had already gotten people all riled up about the whole Denver thing and didn't want to play that game again. So I waited.

We had a blast on the rest of our trip and I didn't want to leave. I just sat and wondered what would happen if we just didn't go back; if we just abandoned ship. I wanted to, but it wasn't right.

Until Morale Improves...

We got back into the Fort and went over to Jake's right after to talk about our trip and catch up on his week. He told us how much he had missed having us around and a simple statement like that was like a wrecking ball, destroying everything that I had ever known about Fort Wayne. We weren't going to be around much longer at all, and this already made me start missing people.

Dean eventually told Jake that we were moving and he wasn't surprised. There was a slight hint of malcontent in his voice, but he shielded it away by telling us that he was happy for us. It was going to be a sad announcement to make to most people. What I was most worried about was telling my dad. I was expecting him to completely go nuts, just for the fact that I would be taking time off of school. I was hoping though, that he would realize that I wasn't dumb enough to let my talents go to waste. School was important to me and I always finish what I am set out to do. I just wasn't ready to feel the backlash.

Monday I had to work and Tuesday I went back to school, beginning the monotony once again. Damn, a week wasn't enough. It seems like professors wait until after a period of rest to really lay the work load on. What a joke. Even that week, I was losing sleep and forgetting what a well rested body felt like. I wondered how much longer I would be able to do these things to myself.

I was writing article after article but seeming to get nowhere. Whenever I would try to make a statement out of the norm, it was almost like it would just come back and hit me in the face somehow or the editor would name some issue with it

or something. I could never win, but I most certainly kept trying.

This chick in the smoke hut one day handed me this flyer about some convention centered around the male experience at IPFW. I thought to myself, 'big fucking deal.' But she for some reason expected me to become bothered and frustrated by the whole thing. She thought that because the school was hosting an all-male event that this was reason for heat, for anger, for frustrations to arise. I ended up writing my column that week about how in the heat of the last several decades in the issues of women's rights that masculine rights have almost been thrown to the wayside. Everyone seems to be so concerned about paving the way and walking on eggshells for and around women that men, in a sense, had almost been discriminated against.

For one reason or another this particular article didn't fly with the paper. For what reason, I'll never know. Maybe they weren't ready for a female, a self-proclaimed feminist even, to stand up for the well-being of men. People have long forgotten the true meaning of the word 'feminist.' It means an individual who is a proponent for the equal treatment of all people. Maybe I should billboard the definition.

Most of my friends knew about my plans to move. The only thing really standing in our way was Dean finding somebody to sub-let his apartment, which wasn't as easy as it may sound. All he needed was someone to take over his lease. For the longest time he had several people interested but no follow-through. It was getting arduous. This was when I decided not to tell my family until he found somebody who was dedicated to taking over.

Before any of my family members knew about my relocation plans, my mom, sister, and myself went out for a girls' day at this hotel. My cousin was a part of it so we went to support her for the most part. It was fun, there were several

booths and tables around full of women selling various merchandise of a very feminine nature. It was stuff I wasn't really into, but it was fun watching other women go crazy for the shit nonetheless.

For whatever reason there was a fortune teller there. I never put much stake into the whole psychic readings thing, but I figured I would do it for entertainment sake; a shits and giggles excursion at best.

I sat down at her table and decided on the bag of rocks instead of the deck of cards. Before anything, though, she had me emblazon my signature on an index card. I did and she passed it over the flame of a candle. The second she passed my card over the flame it went out. To her, this signified that I had been letting people walk all over me, which was true to a certain extent in the contexts of the workplace. She re-lit the flame and passed the card over once more. She looked at the smoke stains and asked me if I was pregnant.

The stains looked like a mother and father holding a baby. She said that either meant that there was a baby on the way or that I was about to embark on an important journey. The latter made sense. The reading continued.

She began by instructing me to pull out a series of marked stones out of a bag. I laid the stones down on the table and she began telling me what it all meant. First and foremost she told me that there was a blonde haired blue eyed man that I needed to keep in my life. She then talked about how life hadn't been incredibly kind to me, especially in the last year. Then, she told me that there was something big that I had been planning for years on end and the universe was now telling me that it was finally time to do it.

She proceeded with other thoughts that could go any way my mind would let them, and she finally asked if I had any questions for her. I asked, "the man that I'm with now, I'm supposed to be with him, right?"

She responded, "He is the way he is for a reason and

you are the way you are for a reason."

The reading was finished and I left to smoke a cigarette. I wasn't entirely convinced of anything from or because of the reading, but its intensity still hasn't left me.

While I was smoking I decided that even though Dean hadn't found anyone to sublet his apartment yet, that now was as good a time as any to tell my mom that I was moving.

We were walking back upstairs and I looked at her.

"There's something that I've gotta tell you. Something big."

"You're pregnant?!" she said with an excited gasp.

"No. Hell no," I said back.

"You're dropping out of school?"

"Not entirely," I said.

"You're moving?"

"Yeah," I instantly said back, "Dean and I are moving to Portland sometime in the beginning of summer."

"Well, you need to do whatever makes you happy, and if this is that something, then go for it."

I was shocked to see her take it so well when I divulged my secret, but with the whole Denver thing almost a year ago, I think that I did my fair share of getting everyone all worked up. Everyone knew that I had wanted to leave Fort Wayne for a very long time, and this was finally my time to go for it.

It was going to happen, I was determined to call this town out on everything that was wrong with it. How bad it smelled, the way that driving around it meant that you were circulating around a black hole, the way that the faces looked; like what were once a team of people with happiness on their sides, now filled with loathing for themselves and everything around them. I couldn't do it anymore.

Duality

Dean had been getting really close to finding someone to take over his apartment. Lots of lookers, but no movers. It was getting incredibly stressful on the both of us; he was even considering taking out a loan to pay for the remainder of the lease up front. It wasn't hopeless just yet, but it was close.

I woke up one morning at his place while he was at work and I decided that I couldn't wait any longer to tell my dad about my moving plans. It was a conversation that I was dreading. I went into it expecting lecture upon lecture about school and being irresponsible with my life and so forth. The truth was that I had a plan. I was planning on taking a year off, getting my Oregon residency as to avoid paying out of state tuition, and work and write for the next year. I didn't think that my dad would be having it though. Regardless of my inhibitions, I picked up the phone and made the call.

He answered and typical conversation ensued and then I got sick of dancing around what I was really calling about so I just told him. I told him about the move, the plans once we got there, and the financial situation I was going to be in once everything came to fruition.

Surprisingly he took it well. We didn't have a precise moving date set in stone just yet but I knew that it was going to be decided upon soon. I could feel it in my blood.

The conversation came to a close and a sense of relief befell me like a new fleece blanket. I was warmed with the sense of understanding that my dad had for my desire to get out of town and something told me that he finally understood that I would never be able to follow my dreams while uncomfortably nestled in the bitterness of Fort Wayne.

Another week went by and that Friday Dean finally found somebody to take over his lease. The gentleman who took it over had the best timing because had he not taken over the lease when he did, Dean would have had to pay the next

month's rent. Everything seemed to be falling into place appropriately and, as far as we could tell, there were no snags in our planning.

So once again, Dean packed up his things and we were the proud couch surfing couple that we had started out as. We knew in our hearts though, that things were only going to be this way for a short while longer. Once we got to Portland, we would have a guaranteed place to sleep at all times; a home that we could call our own. It was almost a foreign concept seeing as how the first part of the year had transpired. It would be a healthy change for the both of us.

With A Little Help From My Friends

School anymore had seemed to be nothing more than a chore that I was paying to do. Everything was building up all at once and I had never felt as overwhelmed as I had then. I spent countless nights still with Winner and Amber, up all night working on things that would never pay off. What was I doing? It got harder and harder to remind myself that soon I would have some time off for myself.

It was difficult, too, to find time to spend with Dean. We would usually get two precious nights a week together, typically spent chain smoking and watching South Park DVDs. It was what I needed to break up my week though. I needed the relaxation. I needed him. I always seemed to need him.

It became clearly evident how my mom felt about my moving and on my part it was incredibly difficult to deal with. She knew that all I ever wanted to do was get out of Fort

Wayne, but it was something that was ultimately going to take her a while to accept. I went to a family gathering and nobody on her side of the family was happy for me. They kept feeding me lines about how 'family doesn't leave family' and 'you're alienating everybody,' and so on. My mom even went as far as to consider Dean to be abusive and the only reason I was leaving was because he was making me.

It was unfortunate to get that kind of a response, but through conversations with friends, it led me to understand that was just the way they were dealing with the initial shock of my announcement. I knew that soon enough, everybody would relax and actually be happy for me. I wanted everyone to be happy for me and, especially, I wanted no bad blood between my mother and I.

It was still incredibly difficult for me to deal with the way that everyone was acting. Here I was, only trying to make myself happy, and all that was happening in return was nothing but negativity. It wasn't going to stop me, but I wanted my last month in Fort Wayne to be as enjoyable as possible. People even wanted to make *this* difficult for me. Now more than ever, I was ready to pay my final respects to that city.

Key To The City

I found through the decision to jump ship, the most important things about the town you live in aren't bars, venues, street signs...nothing like that. The aspects that one needs to place the most importance on are the people that you choose to surround yourself with while dealing with the bars, venues, and street signs. Without those people, is anything bearable?

I had people to stand by me when I made stupid mistakes, drank too much, fucked people over, let people fuck me over, when I complained about my own self-inflicted

psychological trauma, and just about anything else that comes to mind. I knew in my mind that I had been born and raised in Fort Wayne, Indiana for a reason and this was not anything that I was just planning on letting go. I had to hold onto it as close to my heart as I could, no matter how many miles got in the way.

I spent much of that last month pooling money for the move, paying off debts, and finishing out my semester with stride. As we chose our moving date to be May 11th, I would have my last day of work on the fifth, finish school on the sixth, and have plenty of time for farewell parties and gatherings. As the days passed, it became harder to fit everything in it seemed. I wanted to see everyone, hang out with everyone, get as many hours in as I could...sometimes it was near impossible.

I always held true to my personal belief, though, that there were always more important things I could be doing than sleeping. I would spend several hours at work, school, or both; then get a phone call from a friend and spend a few nighttime hours with the important ones. I couldn't and wouldn't take those last precious hours with those close to me for granted. I owed it to each and every one of them for making my life spent in the Fort that much more bearable.

It also became clear to me at one point that not everybody I held dear to me would stay in contact once I was almost three thousand miles away. Distance is a funny thing. People move and grow apart, it's nature. But the funny part about all of it to me is how so many people talk about how much they will miss you, about how they're going to keep in touch, about how upset they are about you moving, but the ones who talk most about it seem to be the ones who barely make an effort at all. Maybe it's because they want to create that sort of detachment. Maybe it's because they are afraid that they would realize how much you meant to them in the scheme of everyday life. Maybe it's because they really just don't care. Either way, you figure out a lot when you make a decision like I did.

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Chelsea, Baby

Chelsea had been a good friend of mine for quite some time. The only problem that we ever had throughout most of the friendship had to do with scheduling difficulties. It seemed that most of the time when she was free I was busy, and vice versa. We were always good at staying in touch though.

When Chelsea and I first started hanging out, I was almost sixteen and still living with my mom. She wouldn't let me ride around in cars with friends until I turned sixteen so, I naturally snuck around. Chelsea had just moved to the Fort from Flint, Michigan and I was pretty much the first friend she made; I wasn't about to let one small rule force Chelsea to go to shows alone.

I remember the first time that she and I talked like it was yesterday. We had study hall together and she always sat up front, myself near the back. Before the actual study hall started there was always a little bit of gab time at the beginning. I remember one day another friend of mine was sitting up toward the front and I stopped talking only to notice this unfamiliar face sporting none other than a Brand New t-shirt.

I turned my head and said to her, "Hey, I like your shirt."

"Excuse me?!" she said back, mistaking my compliment for an insult.

"No, seriously," I said, "Brand New is one of my favorite bands."

And from there, the rest was history. We would find time to talk before and after study hall each day, then we exchanged numbers, then we went to our first show together, and we even went as far as to create a notebook to pass to each

other between classes. In an extremely short time, we had formed a solid and unique bond, none like I had with any of my other friends at the time. I always wanted a friend like Chelsea, and now I had one.

It was throughout my friendship with Chelsea that I truly discovered that life is nothing more than one long string of moments. The memorable ones, the ones that stick with you forever, the ones that last a lifetime...those are infinite moments. I'm not going to take any kind of credit for coining that phrase, but that's the best and only way to put it in my opinion.

After I turned sixteen, Chelsea and I were almost always together. She always used me as her photography model because I had the best contrast out of all of her friends. We went to shows any chance we got. There were some nights that simply driving around together was enough.

It was the time we spent driving around together that the moments started adding up. After I moved in with my dad I had a curfew of midnight on the weekends and sometimes we wouldn't hit Gump road until 11:58. She would gun it to ninety, windows down, music blaring, the season's winds either biting or kissing our faces.

When she didn't have a CD player, we would scream the lyrics to 'Cute Without The 'E'' at the top of our lungs. We would go to shows and make fun of all the scene kids, even though we in actuality were right there with them. We would wait until the next weekend rolled around and we would do it all over again. We had a bond that was truly unique.

When the time came for me to tell Chelsea that I was moving, she was one of the only people with an attitude that reflected that she was happy for me and that it was about time for me to get out of Fort Wayne. I always appreciated that about her. She was one of the only people I could remember to put all selfishness aside and actually be happy for me. This meant more to me than any 'good luck' paired with a pat on the

back.

In the month or so before I left, we did whatever we could to spend time with one another. I'd crawl my ass out of bed early to go hang out at a close by coffee shop with her. I even made it out to the Rail a few times with her. That's saying a lot.

There were a few nights that I was so bogged down with homework that hanging out was simply not possible. I remember one night I showed up to campus around six p.m. and didn't leave until six the following morning. I was gathering research for a project I was doing and I wanted to have everything finished before the brunt of the moving preparations ensued. Man, school really got me down sometimes.

I remember one night I spent the majority of working on homework and I was pretty exhausted. Chelsea had called me up earlier that evening to see if I wanted to hang out; I hadn't given her a yes or no either way. I finished what I was working on, I was exhausted, but as I have always believed... there are far more important things in life than sleep. So I called her.

"Hey woman," I said, "I'm exhausted. But let's hang. I'll have to stop somewhere and get an energy drink first."

"Don't worry about it," she said, "I already got us two sugar-free Rockstars. We're going on a drive."

She knew me all too well.

"Fair enough," I said.

"I'll pick you up in a few."

I waited around a little longer and she showed up. I walked through the garage and sat in her car, the Rockstar she bought for me waiting in the passenger side cup holder. We took off, I didn't know where we were going, really neither did she. We just drove.

"The reason I have wanted to hang out at night so much lately is because of the infinite moment. I've had two in my entire life, and one of them was with you. I remember the day

a couple of years ago that we were driving around and we pulled off into the Meijer parking lot. You were cold and I had my welding jacket in the trunk so I let you borrow it. You sat on the trunk smoking a cigarette, and we hung out in the parking lot and talked before going on another drive. I don't know why, but that day has stuck with me ever since. With you leaving and all, I know that we can't re-create an infinite moment like that, but we can come close. That's why I wanted to go on a late night drive with you, at least one more time."

"I get it, dude," I responded, "I'm sorry that school has gotten in the way so much. It really sucks that I have to leave as soon as school as out. It just doesn't feel like enough time."

We talked about everything that night. She made it clear how happy she was for me even though she was going to miss me terribly. I talked to her about my happiness regarding getting out of Fort Wayne, albeit some surrounding aspects being mildly bittersweet. I wasn't in the best standing with my mom at the time, Dean didn't entirely understand the way I was feeling, and I still had everything with school going on. It was a lot of stress on me, but my mind was made up.

We eventually made our way to the north side of town and pulled into the YMCA parking lot. We drove all the way to the edge and got out of the car, sitting by the headlights and facing an extending field of grass. The night air drenched me like a lukewarm bath. I lit up a cigarette and sucked myself into the night. The stars intermittently peeked in and out from underneath the clouds, the moon nowhere to be seen but its presence somewhere out there still casting a glow on our surroundings. At that place in that time, Chelsea and I were infinite.

I smoked a couple of cigarettes while we sat out there and talked then we both grew tired. I stomped out the glowing ember and we let ourselves back into the car, embarking on our last leg; rest.

Although Chelsea and I didn't always spend as much

time together as we would have liked, I knew that she was one of my only friends who had a deep appreciation for the simple things, like late-night drives to nowhere. I knew that when I left for Portland, she would be one of the people that I would miss the most. When she dropped me off back at Winner and Amber's, I laid my head on my pillow and was able to rest easy knowing that I had found a real gem among people in the humble surroundings of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Soco Amaretto Lime

In the grand scheme of moving, the most important things to do were paying off local debts and finding a job. Dean had already found a job with the help of Michull. He would be working in the meat department at Whole foods Market alongside his best friend. I was happy for him, but it was getting incredibly frustrating knowing that I probably wouldn't have a job until a short while after arriving in Portland. Dean consistently assured me, though, that no matter what he would take care of me and meet all of my needs to the best of his ability.

The moving day was set and we had about two weeks left in town. Dean was flying to Portland for a week to work at his new job. While he was gone, we agreed that I could use his car so I would be able to stay at my parents' house. I would have wheels, so the commute would be no problem.

He took his car to the shop to have it looked over, both in preparation for my having it for a week and our drive across the country. The check up went fine and everything was go until one night that he was driving to pick me up from Winner and Amber's.

It was pouring down rain and he was on his way over. It was taking him longer than usual and then he texted me. The initial plan was for me to drive him to the airport in his car and

then all would be set for the next week. I got his text that said, 'Okay. Car stalled. Change of plans.' I got worried but he showed up sooner than later. What must have happened was he drove through a large puddle and the car stalled, but he didn't want to take any chances especially since I would be making the return trip from Indianapolis by myself.

The plan now was to have Jake pick us up from Dean's parents' house in the morning and all three of us would ride to the airport together. So Dean and I made our way to his parents and after he was done packing for his trip, we crammed together on the couch, the last time we would sleep next to each other for a week. It would be the longest we would go without seeing each other for the duration of our relationship thus far. We weren't looking forward to it, but we knew that he needed to go.

We got about three hours of sleep and then Jake showed up, it was time to leave. The three of us got into the car and cued up the music, taking off and making a brief stop at a gas station for some fuel and coffee. Somewhere along the highway we came across a patch of heavy rain, so heavy in fact that Jake had slowed the car to about thirty miles per hour and we still couldn't see through the windshield. It was terrifying indeed, but eventually we made it through the storm and the roads were fine.

The hours passed and we finally arrived at the airport, the moment I had been dreading for days. We all got out of the car at the same time, Jake said his goodbyes first then got back in. Dean took me into his arms, kissed me, and as our faces withdrew from each other, he looked me in the eyes and for the first time said to me, "I love you." I kissed him once more and said it back. The moment was perfect, bittersweet, but timely. I got back into the car and watched him walk into the airport, a few tears leaking from my eyes. Jake and I began the drive back home.

We talked and listened to music for the duration of the

trip. The day became increasingly beautiful as we drove, and although we were both exhausted we were glad that we were both there together.

When we got back into Fort Wayne, it was my duty that day to gather my belongings at Winner and Amber's. The next week held for me packing and cleaning out my room at my parents' house. Not only did I have things to take care of there, but I also wanted to spend as much time back at my house as I could before I left town.

Jake dropped me off back at Dean's parents' house so I could get his car and head over to Winner and Amber's. I got to the house to collect my belongings and we made plans to go to Cosmo's for breakfast. I gathered my things which took me far less time than what I had estimated for myself, then Amber, Jake, and myself all went out for breakfast. It would be one of the last breakfasts of normal tone.

After breakfast, I dropped Amber off back at her house and made my way back to dad and Allie's. I was happy to be with the kids, happy to be able to spend so much time back at home, and happy to be mobile once again if only for a short while. It granted me with the ability to spend as much time with everyone as I could. The bummer of the whole thing was that the next week was finals week which meant that much of my time would be spent in preparation and trepidation of the week to come. It was alright with me though, because some time was better than no time. I had to cherish the moments I had left.

Although Dean was in Portland, we still talked at least once a day. They were looking at a few houses while he was out there and I made it very clear that I didn't want to agree to anything until I saw it for myself first. I was at work one day and Dean called me wanting to fax a house application to me. I reaffirmed my stance on the house situation and he said that it was fine, they all just wanted to get the ball rolling on the

whole thing. I was alright with that and agreed to filling out the application but waiting until I got to Portland, saw the house, and could make a decision on it myself.

That Wednesday I was to go to my mechanic's and pay off my remaining debt, clean out my car, and have a junk car guy come and pick it up. He took the car for three hundred bucks and it was three hundred bucks that I could definitely use. It was strange cleaning out the car. I felt like I was watching over it, as someone else watching a person throw away two years of their life. Cars are a funny thing that way. To some people they make up half of who they are. My car didn't play that much of an importance in my life, but what I had in it did.

There were loads of old notebooks, old clothes, bags upon bags of stuff that I hadn't seen in six months. I threw most of it away because I figured that if it was stuff that I hadn't used in six months then I didn't really need it. In actuality it was the final leg of my journey to simplification.

A couple of days went by and Dean texted me to tell me that we got the house. I was excited for about five minutes until I started thinking about it a little more. It crossed me the wrong way, making a decision like that knowing fully well that I wasn't involved in the decision making process. We talked about it on the phone that night, about how I felt he completely disregarded my wants and made the decision himself. It was the first real disagreement we had, and it was unfortunate that the argument had to happen over the phone. Be it as it was, it took me a long time to get over the principle of the whole thing.

I was working and schooling all the while spending as much time as possible at the house with my family. Granted, half the time I was there my nose was closely entwined with a book or computer screen, but the mere presence was what counted.

Friday night rolled around and my dad and I got pretty

drunk together. We laughed, talked about Dean, about music, and anything in between. I loved nights like those. The weather was finally nice enough to where we could spend time out on the back porch and not layer ourselves with weather gear. The night was truly necessary.

After a while, though, the whiskey started getting to me. That's the funny thing about whiskey. The night could be going exceedingly well, but one slight miniscule thing can turn everything the wrong direction.

Dean had called and the conversation was normal; drunken, but normal. Then he cut me off because he was heading into a bar and for whatever reason, it turned me entirely. From that point on, I was not a pleasure to be around. I realized how mean I was getting, then I put myself to bed.

I woke up the next day with enlightened senses and a new kind of ebb in my step. I made the decision to end my night when I did because I didn't want to dampen it with any unwarranted harsh feelings that I may have had. I was off to work with only four more shifts to go of my employment in Fort Wayne, a strange feeling indeed.

The next day, Dean was to return from Portland. Even though we fought earlier in the week, I missed him terribly and wanted nothing more than to be back to sharing a couch with him. I called Chelsea up and she was going to ride down to Indianapolis with me. I guess going for drives really was Chelsea and I's thing.

She made a sign that commemorated the fact that Dean was an accidental scene kid. It was the back of a notebook with the word 'Orgcore' colorfully emblazoned upon it with a rainbow reaching over it (for 'orgcore,' see "yoursscenesucks.com" or Dean's Facebook). She was to hold the sign up when we pulled up to the airport so Dean could easily find us. We circled around four times before he was outside, but we pulled up and I finally saw him standing there. We parked, held out the sign, and I leapt out to give him the

full embrace he deserved. We hugged and kissed briefly before getting back into the car and taking off.

Chelsea fell asleep in the back seat after a while and Dean and I sat up front and conversed. God, I missed him so much. I never thought that seven days apart from someone would take so much out of me, but it did. I was so glad to have him back.

We got back into Fort Wayne, dropped Chelsea off at her house, then headed over to Winner and Amber's where we kissed to the fragmented glow of the television. In his arms was where I belonged. It was our last week in town.

Come Tuesday I would be done working at H&M, come Wednesday I would be done with school at IPFW. These notions were both weighing extremely heavy on me. I had completed most of my work for school. In the last two weeks, I had written twenty-seven pages worth of research papers, conducted a presentation, taken several German exams, and exhausted myself dry with trepidation of the weeks to come. All of it, no matter how well I paced myself, seemed to pile up all at once. It didn't help that I was working as much as possible in order to build up my bank account enough to last a while. I was exhausting myself in almost every possible way.

I knew I would be faced with some early good-byes. As a present to herself, Winner was leaving for North Carolina early Friday morning so our last night together would be Thursday. Chelsea was going to Chicago that weekend so Thursday would be our last night together as well. It was hard to focus on anything else with this on my mind every minute of every day leading up to it.

I didn't feel like I was ready, but who really is ready for something like this? At least I had school to distract me. At least I had Dean to distract me, and I'm glad that I didn't lose my mind too early on. Emotions took the backseat while finals week prevailed. Robin: 0, IPFW: 1.

C/O TIPPY

I met my lovely best friend C-Unit my sophomore year of high school in Spanish class. The very first thing I ever said to her was, "I like your shoes." And in Robin fashion she looked at me like I was crazy and simply said, "thank you." That was the beginning of our beautiful and ridiculous friendship. Even though I just met her in high school I feel like I have known her my whole life. She is my other girl half. We have been through a lot of ups and downs together, but I wouldn't change it for the world because it has made our friendship that much stronger. We have had some crazy times. My favorite memories are the times we would drive around in my car and crank up the music and sing at the top of our lungs and not give a fuck what anyone thought.

In high school both of us were looking and searching for something to make us happy, but we never looked inside of ourselves because we were scared. It's really hard to be alone. She decided to about a year ago and I was worried about her, but I knew that she would pull through. Then she met a really great group of friends. Unfortunately I didn't get to meet them until her going away party and she was moving two days later. When I went to the party I wasn't expecting much to be honest, but I went away from it a better person. I was super worried about her going to Portland because I had never met Dean and I thought maybe she was just following a guy.

After the party though, my mind was changed completely. I had never seen so much love in one room. Not just between Dean and Robin, but them and all of their friends. It was refreshing. They took me in like I had been there the whole time and I loved it. I had never seen Robin so happy.

Seeing her this happy in turn made me very happy and I knew that the move would be good for her.

I love Robin to death and I know she will always be there for me, even when I'm doing completely dumb shit. And in return, I will always be there for her. She is and always will be my best friend. No matter what shit we go through in life we will always have that friendship and that connection. I'm proud of you, C-Unit.

Joy

Thursday rolled around. We were all done with school and the slew of going away parties was set to begin that night. We all decided on the Brass Rail because it was cheap and had the best jukebox in town. Dean and I were meeting up at Winner and Amber's because it was Winner and I's last night together, and both her and Amber had some going away presents for us.

We had our gift exchange along with several laughs. The gifts ranged from products to combat my ghastly foot odor to football mouth guards for Dean in case the urge to punch him in the face overcame me. Need I mention, too, that the majority of gifts were emblazoned with 'Twilight' stickers. Thanks, pals.

Dean out of the kindness of his heart volunteered to be our designated driver for the evening because he knew how important the night was to Winner, Amber, and myself. The three of us had seemingly defeated the odds together so we wanted to take our last evening as a trio with stride. This meant getting wasted together.

Chelsea was also meeting us that night because she was leaving for Chicago the next morning. God, I really didn't want to start my goodbyes this early. It broke my heart

knowing that I wasn't going to see two of the most important faces to me until September. I felt cheated.

We got to the Rail and sat at a table, our group small at the beginning of the night but growing and growing as the evening progressed. The drinks were flowing and we were all having a blast. I was getting drinks handed to me left and right while the bartender gave Dean shit for drinking coffee.

The hour of twelve, the time which Winner and I had to part ways, dawned closer. Winner, Amber, and myself all went outside and sat on the curb smoking cigarettes together. It didn't take long for our tears to come pouring out. The alcohol did nothing more than intensify the dark hue of sadness that had enveloped us all. We didn't want this goodbye, not now. It seemed like it all happened too soon, like we weren't granted nearly enough time.

Winner got a phone call from the people who she was leaving with so Dean had to take her back to her house. The sadness was billowing inside of me, like a tsunami waging war on a coast. My eyes were burning from the combination of tears, makeup, and smoke. There wasn't anything that could make this sinking in my heart diminish.

Winner and I hugged our last tear filled embrace and she got into Dean's car, the last time I would see her until September. While caught up in that moment, there was another goodbye I had to make. Chelsea was getting ready to leave the bar and I had to face it yet again. I hugged Chelsea, my face unable to produce any more tears, and said my goodbyes to her.

So, I was at the bar. A lot of friends still there but the core of my circle was gone. With Dean, Amber too rode back to the house to draw her evening to a close. Becky, a friend more of Dean's than of my own, stayed seated with me to assist in keeping my calm. I really appreciated her being there because hadn't she, I don't know what I would have done.

Dean came back and by this time I had tired of the Rail. My feelings of the place had grown toxic and everything I

looked at or heard brought nothing but sadness upon me. It wasn't something I wanted to deal with any longer if I didn't have to. This being obvious, Dean, myself, and a few others went to Side Pocket. I barely remember being there and soon enough, Dean and I went back to the house to pass out. I would wake the next morning with sobered senses about the night and ready to begin anew.

I woke up with a pain in my gut that would only grow worse with the events of the next few days. I wasn't having second thoughts about moving, I just hadn't prepared myself for the true nature of the event. How is one supposed to?

Amber and I were going to do some shopping that day because I wanted something decent to wear for the going away festivities and, being the type of girl I am, hadn't done much shopping for myself in quite some time. It felt right.

We had another get-together to go to that night and Dean was going out for some beers with my dad to reassure him about everything. Dean was painfully nervous about it but he didn't need to be. My dad is a pretty easy going guy and I knew for a fact that he viewed Dean as the most respectable guy I had ever been with. So while Dean was off doing that, Amber and I had some time for us.

We did our thing for a while, shopping, doing our hair and make-up, overall just acting like girls for once. This wasn't something that happened all that often, especially on my end. I felt I had earned it.

Dean, after several hours, showed back up at the house and we were ready to head out to Moshboy's place in Leo for our second night of gatherings. Amber followed us and after turning around several times and being within inches of getting t-boned in the middle of the street, we found his place in the dark middle of nowhere. The near accident event caused my heart to pound and my breath to collapse. I got out of the car shaking and thankful for my life. Alas, we were there and we

were alive.

Us and a few others gathered around a table for card games and conversation centered around music and Jrod's grandmother's brownies. We talked and laughed for hours, the group eventually thinning to just Moshboy, Dean, and myself. We went upstairs to listen to music and eventually found ourselves putting sweatshirts on and crawling out the window and onto the roof.

The three of us laid there, drinks in hand, staring up into the abyss looking down on us. Until that point, I had never been more hypnotized by something so natural and pure. I don't know if it was the alcohol, the clarity of the scene above, or if it was a combination of both, but I felt dizzy because of it.

The dizziness in my head and my gut seemed to stretch on for as many miles as the stars. I was talking and engaging in conversation, but I was somewhere else entirely. I had two days left in Fort Wayne. It was like closing a book that took me twenty-one years to write. I was drawing history to a close, history I couldn't look back on. At that point, the only being reading the chapters of my book was the sky above. It was looking down on me, picking apart my grammar, punctuation, sentence structure... all that I had been writing down for the last twenty-one years. I finally felt like I had an award winning novel.

Dean and I woke up the next day knowing that we were going to be scrambling around until our grand finale started. The last of the going away parties was that night. My stepmom's friend offered her house for the festivities and it was set to be a complete blowout. She welcomed it, though. Jen was going through a messy divorce and she felt like her house hadn't seen life in ages. Having the party there seemed appropriate for the both of us.

Dean and myself went to make the appropriate purchases before heading over to Jen's house. I told myself I

wasn't going to start drinking until around five, but that lasted all of about a half hour after getting to the house.

Guests started arriving around two, then slowly but surely within a few hours, the house was flooded with guests. Family, friends, and acquaintances joined forces in destroying the night. Dean, Jake, and Moshboy took it upon themselves to harass my sister with drunken vigor while clad in party shorts. She later admitted to liking it.

Time seemed to be moving slowly and quickly at the same time, probably the result of being faced with several more goodbyes while heavily influenced by alcohol. Every time someone had to part, my eyes flooded and I couldn't stop crying.

Between the tears, though, were laughs, smiles, hugs... all the result of so much love contained in such a small area. At times I felt like the house was going to collapse, simply because the walls weren't able to support the weight of the hearts contained within its walls on that night.

I finally felt like everything was okay, despite all of my tears. Things with my mom and I, even though rough at the beginning, felt like they had finally worked themselves out. I had no bad blood left with anyone I knew, and as far as I was concerned, they had none with me. The only bad blood I felt was flowing to my once again drunkenly injured foot. It wouldn't be a celebration in my honor if I didn't end up hurting myself somehow.

We screamed our favorite songs at the top of our lungs, we double-fisted beers and half-gallons of whiskey, and we all joined hands in celebration of everyone moving on with their lives. In that respect, I think Dean and I were an inspiration to everyone. They were scared for us, we were scared for ourselves, but fear was never something we wanted getting in the way of our lives. In the end, Fort Wayne was a lesson to the both of us that if you don't like your situation, make it the best that you can while you are trying to change it. Surround

yourself with the people that matter, the people who are going to be cheering you on during your quest for happiness. Without those people, change isn't possible. Thank you, Fort Wayne, for this simple lesson alone.

— end —

-Special Thanks-

* Bob Rebrovich of
Dreme for the badass
cover design
- www.dreme.net

* all the generous
kickstarter supporters
for making this publication
possible -

- Will Levy
- Daniel Wiene
- April Elliott
- Sara Crowell
- Caleb Crago
- Jason Schneider
- Mary Jo Wolf
- Sara Whitney
- Kris Pliskey
- Alecia + Chris Miller
- Susan Jeffrey
- Dan Weirich
- Laurie Kirchner

- Mike Firestine
- Joe Biel of Microcosm Publishing
- Elly Blue
- Josh Saitz of Negative Capability
www.negcap.com
- Meredith Tanner
- Erica Esslinger

~without these people, the zine you hold in your hands would not exist!~

Thanks are also in order for the few contributions I had this time around,



- Amber Osterholt
 - Cinnamon Wymann
 - Tippy Dennis
- ~ thank you all again for helping me tell my story! ~

Thanks to my loving friends, family, and boyfriend for the inspiration to write, the will to continue, and the love that has kept me going all these years. You are all a part of making this happen!

Stay on the look out for:

- Earn Your Sleep #2 by Dean Omite
 - Coffee drink #1 + 2 by Dean Omite
- Yours truly
- Future issues or Bird Shit
to be released in 2011

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