

Throw that bottle and let me shoot at it.

To tell with a lonely night.

I know that my interests are malformed. I've lived a life like... the only life that I have known. I've been thinking for the last few days about talk. Not just one place conversation but all the places. I've been thinking about all the places that I've been to. I've been thinking about all the people that I've met. And so this is how it was all around me people talking about other people. That was everywhere. I wouldn't have many times I've done the same thing. I guess that's what makes me off, the fact that I learned that thing and now have to fix it.

His head was all fucked up. Even though his body was awake his brain wasn't. He was the thinking person.

He began to move when something went wrong he had lost sight of it. Fight. Fight. Fight. Fight. I stand and start you scream. Fight. I leave, you talk, me talk, you scream. Fight. I talk, I talk. Let out words inside. I wrong. Wrong person. Fight. Don't dare not say worst possible thing. You like fight? Anne like fight?

A waitress walks up slipping her yellow ticket pad in her palm.

"What can I get for you this morning sir?"

"Ah... coffee... glass of water... bowl of grits... order of toast and two slices of ham."

"Will that be all?"

"Yes, ma."

"It'll be just a minute."

"Oh and when I get an ashtray?"

"That will be..."

"Thanks."

The waitress walks back up to the bar with his coffee and ashtray.

"I wonder how much it is for an impending doom bubble." He says to her. "I've seen billboards for them all over the place... there's one on the way down Piccadilly... you know what they look like... they call 'em 'safe' 'V' ashtray"... large fibreglass bubbles that you can bury in the back yard... they're supposed to be up against decimation of the human population."

The waitress looks at him. She didn't know what to say. She set his coffee on the table. Thanks... He got his sugar and cream and stirred the coffee listening to the faintest of the spoon clink when it hit the rim of the cup.

"I'm gonna try to find out how much they are. Oh, can't forget about that... one for a Y2K survival gun show. Nope can't forget about that."



By: D Bradley Williams

This is All A lie not
A DAMNED thing in here
is True.



By: D Bradley Williams

Billboard.

This morning he's wide awake without coffee. Sleeping by himself gives him no reason to sleep in. His thoughts are still smudged with the dreams from last night as he sits at the bar of the waffle house.

To hell with a lonely night.

I know that my nuances are malformed. I've lived a life, like....the only life that I have known. I've been thinking for the last few days about talk. Not just common place conversation, but conversation about other people. Some call it gossiping. I call it bullshit. It all started growing up in Drop Creek, Al. My mother talked about my father my father talked about my mother. My mother talked to my teachers my teachers talked about my mother and about me. And so this is how it was all around me people talking about other people. That shit's everywhere. I wonder how many times I've done the same thing. I guess that's what pisses me off, the fact that I learned that shit and now have to fix it.

His head was all fucked up. Even though his body was awake his brain wasn't. He ain't no morning person.

He began to remember something from a dream he had last night ("It's Anne. Fight. Hit me. Fight. I stand and stare you scream. Fight. I leave, you talk, me shit, you queen. Fight. I talk. I talk. Let out words inside. I wrong. Wrong person. Fight. Don't dare not say worst possible thing. You like fight? Anne like fight?")

A waitress walks up slapping her yellow ticket pad in her palm.

"What can I get for you this morning sir?"

"Ah....coffee,....glass of water....bowl of grits....order of toast and two slices of tomato."

"Will that be all?"

"Uh..hu"

"It'll be just a minute."

"Oh and ah can I get an ashtray?"

"Sure 'nuf"

"Thanks"

The waitress walks back up to the bar with his coffee and ashtray.

"I wonder how much it is for an impending-doom bubble." He says to her. "I've seen billboards for them all over the place.... there's one on the way down Pineapple..... you know what they look like....they call 'em "safe-'t'-shelter"....large fiberglass bubbles that you can bury in the back yard to hide from storms or the up coming decimation of the human population."

The waitress looked at him. She didn't know what to say. She set his coffee on the table. Thanks.... He poured in sugar and cream and stirred the coffee listening to the sound the spoon made when it tapped the edge of the cup.

"Impending-doom bubbles.... I'm gonna' try to find out how much they are. Oh, can't forget about the billboard I saw for a Y2K survival gun show. Nope can't forget about that."

Back in the fall sometime.... 24-7 shop

Opening a book 14 dollars fell out into my lap they were pressed flat. I have forgotten when it was that I stuck them there. All the same it is a nice surprise.

I started walking down the street in front of my house. The air was thick and humid the street wet and quite. I had stepped out of the shower before I decided to leave the house and so my hair was still wet. It felt pleasant outside. So I walk on up to the gas station which is open 24-7, has good cheap coffee and I'm acquainted with one of the ladies who work there. Her name's Janet. She is a working mother with a large white stye on the inside corner of both of her eyes. She is missing four of her bottom front teeth and she busts more ass than many people who I know. I always talk to her when I go into the store. She'll tell me about her children her son who's 6 and is either just about to or already has graduated from kindergarten, he didn't want to wear a tie for his graduation picture, sounds like a good kid to me. She is always helping her daughter with her class projects, making bridges out of popsicle sticks, sewing patches on vests that tell of the history of Alabama. She gives me free fountain drinks sometimes and always lets me know which cigarettes are on sale. She never cards me (she's seen my I D plenty in the past to know of my age), and always has some story. Like, a while back she told me that her youngest daughter, the one she helps with projects, got into a fight with this other girl.

"And Brandon she wuped that other little girls ass." she'd said raising her eyebrows.

"What for?"

"Well that other little girl up and called her ma maw a whore and Brandon, her ma maw's dead, don't nobody talk about ma maw like that, so she popped that little girl in the head, I had to go and talk to the principal and he said he ain't ever seen two girls go at it like that."

"How old's she?"

"She's 15."

"She's gonna' be a handful for some boy when she gets older."

"Oh, she'll set 'em straight alright."

Or....

"you know I done told you you better stay away from that girl you's in here with the other night she's crazy."

Every now and then someone will come into the store and cause some trouble for her. People wanting free stuff, trying to steel wanting to buy beer without an ID. The other Sunday night (in most places in Alabama you can't buy beer on Sunday, it's illegal) this guy came in a grabbed a case of beer and walked up to the door with it. Janet asked him where he thought he was going. He said he had to get his I D. there was nothing she could do. He walked out the door with it. She called the cops.

She works the night shift from 10 pm to 6 am and sends her children off to school. Man she loves her kids she speaks restlessly about them. They are a big part of her life.

It's about 4 am when I get to the store. I got 14 dollars in a book. Time for a smoke.

2.93 for a pack of Winston lights and a 1 liter sunkist. Janet's not working tonight. Instead there's some new guy his name tag says 'Bert' he looked at the book I was carrying and asked me what I was reading. Labyrinths, it's a book of short stories by this guy called Borges. He picked up the book looked at the cover, nodded his head, and laid it down. I told him to take care and walked out the door.

There's a white retaining wall that runs out from the side of the store. It's short enough for people to sit on. I used to know this guy named Radek. He'd sit out here late at night. Reading books written in Check. He moved away. Up north, Ohio, I think. Ain't seen him in a while. "Blah!"

free food.

Jamie stopped by my apartment to get me to go with him and get some free food at a church across town. He had his skateboard so I decided to grab mine and we'd skate before going to eat. When we got to the main intersection in town Jamie said something to me about this guy who was standing across the street. I didn't catch what he said. But he knew the guy somehow cause he hollered "Cannon!"

"Come on this's 'ol Cannon. He goes to the free meals."

Cannon was wearing a black shirt with a picture of some snow-capped mountains and a wolf standing in front of a blue moon. There were some lightning bolts in the background I think.

Jamie picked up his board and asked Cannon what's up.

"Those magazines are expensive....they want \$5 and \$6 for them."

What the hell is he talking about? I was thinking. "Hey Jamie....?" Jamie didn't know. So I asked him. What kind of magazines?

"You know the kind women model in...."

"You mean like Cosmo, stuff like that?" I said.

"No penthouse and playboy....you know the women model in them...."

"Yeah"

"They'er expensive \$5....\$6 for one...."

We started walking down the street and Cannon started talking more about women.

"Hey....ah....Jamie I think I got a girlfriend now."

"Oh Cannon got a lady."

"Yeah....yeah, we made eye contact for....*five minuets* yesterday....you know she kept giving me the look."

"What look's that Cannon?"

"You know she was flipping her hair and we stared into each others eyes across the room. But she told me that we couldn't see each other until she got better."

"....till she gets better....? You coming out to the church to eat tonight?"

"Uh....yeah I've got a lot on my mind. Women troubles you know....I gotta' go...."

Cannon walked own down the street. And Jamie told me of how one day at the church there were all of these patrons of the church. They were all sitting around having bible study and Cannon came in and started saying that he didn't believe in religion anymore cause that god didn't help him meet a girl. I liked Cannon. He seemed nice enough. Me and Jamie left and went to eat.

When we got there Jamies girlfriend Kat was there. I started talking to her about some bullshit or another that you talk about while standing in line at a church to get free food. And up walks Cannon straight to Kat.

"Hey I just wanted to tell you that your very lucky to have a boyfriend."

"Thanks Cannon." Kat shrugged away. Cannon walked off. "What's his deal?"

"I don't know I just met the guy up on the corner and he started talking about playboy."

So I stood in line waiting for my turn to get my styrofoam plate loaded down to where it'd be about to break. I got chicken and cole slaw and potato salad and some kind of strange strawberry cake. And lemonade mixed with sweet tea. Damn nice.

Ah....

Imagine for yourself, the crashing sound made by a hollow metal newspaper box kicked over on the sidewalk of Magnolia Avenue. By two guys with their shirt tails tucked in. One in a striped shirt the other one nit. They scream in triumph. They have breached the walls built by society. Freed by the alcohol severed at one of the sports bars around town. I watched them run down the sidewalk drunk, jumping, trying to touch the awnings that hang over the sidewalks in front of the shops. Their trail of liberation carries them to battle the ever oppressive forces of the trees planted along the streets by the evil Auburn beautification comity. Striped Shirt faced the adversary head on by climbing the foe and wrenching away some of its limbs. Hell yeah! Nit Shirt screamed as Striped Shirt jumped down from the tree. I decided to remain aloof and follow them on their decimation of Magnolia Avenue. I crossed over to their side of the street. And as the street lights thinned I became more comfortable that I would not be noticed by either of the two.

It is moments like this that in an strange way bring satisfaction to my sometimes pointless nights.

Nit shirt trips and falls in the grass.

"Fuckn'.....ararumar ha ha....shiit..."

Striped Shirt yells "get your fuckn' ass up come'ahn....I'm gonna kick your ass! Getthafuckup!"

I slowed my pace. "I gotta watch this is too good." Striped shirt helps his friend up. Their laughing and talking. I can only make out the occasional 'fuck, shit, damn,...etc' They continue on down the side walk. With me keeping a distance, cause I don't want to be seen.

I live on Burton Street it ends on Magnolia on the next corner. So I figure I'll take the turn when I get there and go in for the night. Just before Burton St. there are two shops one is an antique store and the other used to be a cutesy shop full of all sorts a useless decorative crap. But the cutesy store moved up town. And now it's momentarily vacant. A line of some kind of shrubbery runs along between the two buildings. It hasn't been trimmed in a while. I like it that way. Overgrown and green. The two Shirts come upon the shrubbery. The shrubbery should have tried to hide. But, it was proud with it's alliance to the other vegetation along Magnolia. And was not for one moment even going to contemplate retreat. It had stood in the same spot as the four Magnolia trees across the street in front of St. Paul's Catholic Church had been cut down for obstructing the facade of The Church. It was not about to let two clean shirts scare it. And so the shirts threw there fury onto the shrub. Nit Shirt started punching the shrub.

A sluggish yet carefully calculated l e F T

r i g h T

L e Fff tta

Ri g h t

Striped: That's right let'er have it.

Nit swings faster le ft righ t left rig lef ht.

Leaves are falling from the shrub. Nit can hardly stand up. The side walk would be dark if it wasn't for the street light where the Magnolias used to stand in front of The Church.

Striped: Fuckn' let'er have it. She's a stupid bitch.

Since they had stopped to battle the unrelenting bitch shrub. And I being to amazed to realize how fast I was coming up on them, found my self a few yards away from Stripe and Nit Shirt. And having no chose but to go around I readied myself to deal with the Drunk Shirt Brothers. As I passed, my hands lose, Stripe turned his head towards me. I don't think he even knew I was passing in front of his face. I walked on down the side walk and turned to walk home.

Keith parked his truck in front of a cafe where he used to work and I just quit a week ago. We walk inside and, Jen, a part owner's in there. We go in the back to talk to her. She's her usual "cool bitch" self. We talk shortly. About stupid work related shit. I leave headed for the Krystal's across the parking lot. Keith stays to talk.

"Ah, can I get #3? And, ah, up size it."

"One #3. Will there be anything else?"

"Na'thanks"

She handed me the tray I paid her and walked over to sit in the corner booth. it's only 6 p.m. I got up at 1 p.m. ,and ate a sandwich at my mothers house around 4, I'm not even that hungry. This'll be the second time I've eaten today. Should've thought about that before I ordered. who cares (voice of the American hog). I got french fries, and there's no pepper on the table. I grab one off this other table. Four packs of ketchup, that should be enough. "*The bells are ring-a-ling jing-jing....*" No restaurant in the south that I can remember going in around December ever plays Honika songs. Not that that has any crucial impact on me. I don't know any Jewish people down here. That's not to say that there's not any just that it's pretty rare that I meet anyone who is Jewish. Keith's not Jewish I'm not Jewish. I didn't go to highschool with anyone who's Jewish. On the other hand there's plenty o' Methodist and Baptist. I wonder if there are Jewish people down here who just don't let it be known. Maybe because their scared of the southern stereotype that "don't take kindly ta no strangers." These fries are kinda' cold. Taste like cardboard. More pepper more ketchup.

Keith walks in and steps up to order.

I don't know if I can eat all these fries.

"What's up?"

"I was over smoking with the boss lady gettn' a job."

"So they're gonna take you on for a while?"

"For a couple of weeks.... she told me to call her after Christmas."

"She gonna' pay you anymore this time?"

"It doesn't matter.... I just gotta' get some money. I hate being back here and not doing anything....'cept drinking, and that shit'll kill ya'."

"Yeah, the store looks kinda' slow you'll have time to work on some of your own stuff...."

"Hell no! I'm gonna' work...."

"It doesn't look like there's that much to do.... that guy was just hangn' out over there...."

"I don't care, I'll find something to do.... there's some gunk around the trash can that don't need to be there.... you gotta' show some initiative, people go for that."

"I just remember working at subway and I could sit around for hours and do nothing but read...."

"Yeah, well I'm not gonna' work at subway....I'm working for Brian and Jen...."

"Really....no shit?"

"What were you telln' me about composition with the camera whallago?"

"Yeah you need to set up the back ground a little more....the rule of thirds.... Carli's gonna' be working over there ain't she?"

"Ooh, she's the masseuse"

"I'm gonna' get her to give me a full body massage, then...."

"Dam right!"

"How did you find out she asked about me?"

"She didn't she sent a fax over to the other store saying she was sorry for not meeting me and you the other night."

"....yeah?"

"Yeah but you didn't show up...."

"What time is it now?"

"About 6:30"

"Shit, I told Allen we'd be at his house by now. And we're still sittn' here."

"Man you think he didn't know you'd be at least two hours late. Your always late.

That's alright though.... shit, you'd tell me to meet you somewhere and you'd tell four other people to meet you at the same place. None of us would know each other. So'd there be five people at the same service station or wherever waiting on you and you'd never show. We'd all be just sittn' round looking at each other wondering 'wheredafuck is Keith?' and you wouldn't showe up...."

"Why don't you write a story about how I'm always late?"

"Ttssss....maybe"

Keith pulls the top off his Krystals burger.

"What's that for?"

"Mustard and pickles.... that's allot of fuckn' vinegar...."

Noon and sunny in an American kitchen....

....Allen was walking around, pacing, thinking "I am not sure. I'm not certain about a damned thing. Nothing to me is concrete. Everything moves in front of my face. All is disjointed and frayed." Then he smashed his knee on the corner of the table. It put him on the floor.

Shit!

Damned it!

He climbed into a chair and sat there rocking back and forth rubbing his knee.

Take hold you son of a bitch!

Do something,... fuck!

When the pain left he just sat there rocking and rubbing his knee, thinking. Why does every thing I see. Remind me of clothes at a department store. Fuck. All of these ideas and styles and forms and all the shit that I see and try to touch burns my hands. It is corrosive. I am corrosive. This trap. I have myself in a corner. The trap is myself. It's Self perpetuating. I can't tell if anything that I know is actual. I can't see if any of this is real or if it is just thoughts thrown in like dirty clothes on the floor.

There are traps that are set and meant to be self perpetuating. I'm not sure b' what means they are set. If I get in one I'll know. Some of them have blinders so as to give you tunnel vision. The narrow view of the problem.

I guess I better eat some lunch.

But there was nothing to eat in the frig except a pack of cheese and a dried up onion. The gods laughed.

Don't sleep on the church steps

I was sittn' on the couch at a friends apartment tryn' to figure out what has been goin' on with my life for the past couple of months (yeah, good luck). Trying to guage it in retrospect so as to maybe catch clearly....it's the same old dilemma I go through every month or so. I'll think that I'm starting to pull everything together (what in hell everything is I don't know) and then I realize that I don't know what's goin' on. Slightly frustrating. I was almost out of smokes and caving a coke so, I decided to walk to the 24-7 store on the corner. Scrounged up what change I could find. Found about three dollars worth laying around. Just enough for some smokes and a coke. Left the radio playing a Howln' Wolf CD. Out the door. Down the three flights of stairs. The people who built the stairway didn't take into consideration that someone taller than five feet would perhaps live on the third floor. This's no way helped out by the fact there's no lights in the stairway because of a fire in the stairway around back. The forensic guys accredited it to faulty wiring. So running my hands on the wall and the ceiling I made it down the dark stairway to the patio and onto the sidewalk. It was another cool, late fall, Alabama night. I had on a thin brown button up that I'd picked up a few months ago, at a Goodwill, in anticipation of nights like this.

The sidewalk ran straight, and up a slight incline for three blocks leading to the 24-7 corner store. I started walking with my head down thinking 'I got about \$3.00 it's \$2.00 for a pack of Basics....if I don't get the coke I could get some Winstons instead....nah.' At about that time, I lift my head and see this guy walking towards me on the same side of the street. He's either walkn' with a limp or he's got some jacked up strut. In his right hand he's got a black vinyl satchel and a plastic coffee mug. He raises his left hand to me.

"You got a smoke?" He said this forcibly. Which sorta' pissed me off.

"Yeah" I guess maybe I felt some compasion for him or maybe I liked that he didn't seem to give a shit about what I thought. I handed him the smoke. He asked me for a light. So I was handing him mine...."naw hold I got's one" I put mine back into my pocket. He asked me again for a light. I got mine back out for him. He pulled back and looked at me like I didn't hear him the first time. Fuck this. This guy's rude as hell tryn' to get what he wants and then can't even keep up with his shit.

"Gi'me a quarter or sum'n'. I ain't 'et t'day. I got out of prison this morning. 15 years. I in't do shit. Damn police put crack on me. You got a place to stay?"

"Yeah."

"Uh hu....got a quarter?"

"Na' man. I gotta' cut. See ya'" I took a few steps and the change in my pocket let itself be known.

"Naw..hold on..I just got out of prison. 15 years I in't do shit!"

"Na' what change you hearn' in my pocket's all I got."

"....don't sleep on the church step....'uh 'hu.... white cops'll come up on ya' wiz

ya' sleepn' put crack in yo' pocket 'n ol' black cop come wake ya'. Look in yo pocket 'n take ya' up the street."

"You got some change?"

"Na' man" I told him I had to go and kept on walkn'.

At the gas station a car load of "raver" lookn' kids were all jumpn' around a car parked by the gas pumps. They were dancin' I guess. I walked inside. A couple of weekends ago, while buyin' beer for some people back at the apartment, I left a book of short stories by Dostoevski up here. It had to of been here that I left it cause I remember it was given to me as I was walkn' out the door of the apt. But the guys behind the counter had already tried to find it for me earlier today. So I guess there's no point in askn'. I walked past the cooler where they keep the expensive beer. 'Maybe just one. No. Get the coke, smokes and leave.' I grabbed a 20 oz. coke and walked up to the counter.

"This and one pack of Basic lights-shorts." I said

He handed me the smokes.

"Found your book yet?"

"Na'—

"There was one up here the other night, we'll keep an eye out for ya'."

"I'd appreciate it, thanks" I stepped towards the door.

"Your change?!" he handed me two dimes.

"Oh, yeah,....thanks" I put them in my pocket. I walked out. What was I thinking that needed to be straightened out. I had what I came for. 'Maybe I'm trying to cancel it through drinkn' coke and smokin'. God, I need to start writing again, haven't picked up a pen since I've been in Birmingham. All I've done is work a couple of jobs, walk and try to get this girl out of my head.'

On my way back to the apt. I hear the bum this time on the other side of the street. He is calln' out to a group of girls who'er walkn' away. Guess they didn't have any no money either. I got twenty cents now I can give him. He looked over at me, turned and strutted his limp in the other direction.

I got back to the apt. and up the stairs this time striking my lighter so to see. Sat down on the couch. Smoked and drank the coke.

Apply inside

Listen to this I met this guy who told me about when his parents were going through all the shit involved in getting a divorce, his mother turned to him and said "Tom ride with your dad back to the house." He didn't want to ride with him, he was scared of his father, or maybe he just didn't feel comfortable with him. His dad never liked to spend time with him, always "too busy," out getting drunk and sleeping with other women.... Or at least that's what Tom thought.

This night that his mother told him to ride with his dad they were standing in the yard of his dads mothers house, they called her Nanny, she lived in the country around a small Alabama town called Ragland.

That is all I know of Tom on this night prior to the following lines. He and I talked for a little while sitting on a bench outside of a sandwich shop on the northside of Birmingham. He told me that he had just spent some time in the psychiatric ward of some hospital around town, and he wanted to get a job around the corner at an autobody shop but they wouldn't take him. The following lines are what he gave me with instructions to give it to whoever cause then people would know he was a good guy and maybe they'd give him a job. All I did was to copy the typed page and a half that he handed me.

It was dark and the lights from my mothers car shown on the side of her face and the sound of the cars running screwed up the quite air. She was looking into my eyes, she was lost, confused. I remember her eyes sparkling. But, it is only now that I recognize that glassy sparkle as a tear coated gaze. I didn't want to leave her. My dad had been drinking and my mom and him had been yelling at each other in the yard since it first began to get dark. I had stayed inside most of the time while Nanny distracted me with a deck of Rook playing cards. Those cards had red backings with gold trim around the edges and a crow printed in black holding a fan of cards in one of its outstretched wings. We stacked the cards so that they made houses. The cards had helped me to block a lot of the fighting out, for a while. But, then I was standing there in the yard the lights from my mothers car shining on her from the side, and I guess my little brother was in his car seat in my mothers car, I don't really remember. I'm almost positive that he doesn't remember any of this seeing as how he was only about three years old at the time.

My dad was standing behind me. I looked over my shoulder at him, he laid an askanke drunken look on me. He was turning away, as always. I didn't want to go with him.

"mom I want to ride with you" I said in what I can only imagine as a childs pleading voice. Mixed with frustration and whining.

"no" she pulls me aside "you ride with your dad."

"mom ma...."

She walked over to her car.

I climbed into my dads brown 1986 Jeep Renegade CJ-7. I remember that it had buckshot mudders on it. I guess it was winter or early spring cause he only rode those tyers when it was cold because he said that the heat in the summer would make the traction wear out faster than it would in the winter.

Inside the jeep I kept my jacket on. Cause it was a ragtop jeep, and those have too many gaps in the canopy for them to get comfortably warm.

Driving in the Jeep was usually sedating. The mudders made this "waw-waw-waw" sound on the paved roads and the flapping of the rag-top on the bars.... But not this time. My dad opened a beer as we made our way down the road.

The road from Nannys to our house cut across three mountains, or at least what we call mountains in Alabama, there's a lot of sharp turns on the road. Something makes me think that my dad was crying. But, I do remember him saying on the drive "Your mother just doesn't understand...." I think that's what he always said to me during this period of my life. I always would shiver in the jeep and so I huddled up as close to the heat vent as the seatbelt would let me.

We drove all the way home like this.

I remember on this hopelessly idiotic night looking through the front windshield, the reflection of yellow and orange interior lights on the window, the smell of beer. That night I should have become what is referred to as a man. Instead I huddled on the edge of the seat with my head lifted up into this stupid cold night. I became twisted and lost form.

I don't remember anything else, the rest of the night dies like some frightened dumb lost dog found dead in the morning on the side of the road by its owner on their way out of the house.

It was either months or a couple of years later my mother was talking to me she was nervous and feeling her way carefully. We were talking about my dad. Maybe she was asking what he said or if I was okay with the way things turned out I'm not sure. I remember sitting there at the orange linoleum kitchen counter and she came to the point of telling me that she thought my dad was going to try and kill himself that night. She told me that was why she had been so insistent on me riding with my dad. We never spoke of that night again. The thought of that night recurred to me countless times latter.

Fuck, life is like this this is how it goes. My dad lives far from me, last time I saw him he kicked me out of his house. After his drunk ass screamed for a while. I left his house that night and I haven't been back. Maybe I should'a hit him.

To hell with sentiment.

That's it.

Hot water on cold hands

Hell I'm tell ya a 'lil sumn' I seen at 'is dirt parking lot sitn' on the corner of the main intersection in Cruxville, Alabama. It's right cross the street is the local convenient store right next the ol' Dairy Dump. Tthere ain't been no rain now brown layer of dust gets stirred up all over everything 'round here. The intersection is a four-way stop. It's sort of tradition here after school and on the weekends for most of the highschool kids to park their cars and hang out. The parkn' lot's full of holes from where people'll peal-out. 'The owners don't like the kids being here but they don't care 'bout who owns the place they seen all the older kids doin' it way before them. Like I said it's sort'a tradition.

A while back this boy from the highschool 'as sitn' on the rusted hood of his silver 1984 Honda Accord. His name is Heath Powers but most of the kids around town call him Grundy. He got stuck with that name on the count that he's the type of kid that keeps to himself. He don't talk much to nobody. He don't do that good in school. He's kinda' got a funny look to him, he's short and kinda' chubby, that makes it easy for the kids to pick on him. But now that he and the other kids around town are getting a little older the teasn's sorta' worn off. And some of the kids talk to him a little. So now he's just sitn' on the hood of his car, tryn' a' act 'cool, watchn' cars drive through the intersection.

He heard a cars tires rolln' across the lot and stirn' up this dull crackln' noise. He turned around to see who it was. "Awwh, shit's a fuckn' cop." The cop stops his patrol car and steps out. He's got on them shinny black shoes they wear but, they got dust all over them as sone as his feet hit the ground, on the count they ain't been no rain in weeks. I mean ever thing's done eat up with the heat.

The cop walked up to Grundy. He's got that dumb 'n dangerous look to his face. The kind of look that says "I might just 'cide to be Billy Bad Ass today. If I 'cide to."

"Son you know that there's a limit to how long you can sit here in that car don't c'ha son?"

"yes 'ir I do."

"And son you know that you cann't be sittn' out here past 8 o'clock this afternoon?"

"yes 'ir"

"I'm go on ahead and take down your name son cause we're serious about keepn' you kids where you belong. There are people who own this parkn' lot son, that's who it belongs to, people who work son. Ain't got no time just ta sit around and....you listen' ta me son? You know that this is called loitering and you can be arrested for it. Ya understand?"

"yes 'ir I understand."

"Was yer name son?"

"Heath P'ers"

"Heath P'ers?' Your schoolmates call you Grundy don't they."

"yes 'ir I'm in your sons class." the coppers kid's a real son of a bitch he gives evey' un shit.

Hell the cop didn't give a shit about this runt in his sons class. And scribbled in his vinyl cop note book 'Heath Powers' and out beside it in parentheses (Grundy).

"I'm serious about this son. The owners don't want ya'll sittn' round here in them cars at night."

Grundy nodded his head and the cop walked back over and sat back down in his car.

And 'at cop a'probably sat there for hours 'cept Grundy heard a voice come over the C B and the cop pulled out of the parkn' lot in one hell fire of a hurry slingn' dust up in the air that fell all over Grundy. He told himself that the cop could fuck himself and he was gona' sit there till he felt like headn' home.

Cars and trucks passed through the intersection, but not a single cop since the first one left. Some people passn' by'd glance over at Grundy sittn' on the hood of his car. And he thought to himself 'I bet those who ain't lookn' those'er the bitches who'll say 'yeah I seen Grundy hangn' out on the corner the other....yack, yack, yack....he ain't gonna' mount ta nothin' For some reason he started thinkn' about his one friend, it really whan't his friend, the boy just didn't like ta mess with Grundy, yeah but this guy had left town on a count of his girlfriend drove him crazy. Jimmy was his name. 'He got mixed up with 'at crazy bitch. left town. 'at bitch runs around town always with guys. She says that she just likes guys as friends better than she does girls. I bet. She's just keepn' herself up. Cause now that Jimmy's gone she has no one to keep her comfortable. She just cann't stand to be with out some one who makes her feel wanted. She's always got to have somebody. She's fuckn' batty.'

You know how speakers in some cars'll make the trunk rattle....

....BBBBBMMmkMkbbbbbkkppkppBzBBzkBMMkMMbbbbbpppp....zkzk.....cell Grundy heard one comm' down the street.

'Shit somebody needs to do sumn' bout then rattln' ass speakers. Hell at's Tobis car. Maybe he'll pull over here.'

Tobi pulled his yellow Caprice Classic, his grandad gave it to him, he pulled it over into the convenient store. When he got out he had on tight black jeans and Nikes, that he polished with white shoe polish once a week. And one of 'em those big thick Charlett Hornets Jackets. The kind that's got the hood. He had his ball cap pulled down over his eyes but you could still see his thin mustache. Tobi was real skinny white kid and his mustache made him look kind'a like a rat. There was no other animal that he resemble as much as the rat. He was just so skinny and his face was sorta' pointed. He just looked like a rat. No one ever said shit to him about it. I don't even know if that many people noticed the close likeness of the two. Well Grundy had been wantn' to try smokn' pot and he kinda' understood that Tobi smoked. So he got to feln' anxious about him pulln' up.

Tobi stepped out of the store packn' his cigarets on the palm of his hand. Grundy waved to him. Tobi lifted his head in recognition. He got in his car, this time without turn' on his 'rattl'n ass speaker', and pulled up next to Grundy.

"Whas' up Tobi?"

"Sshhit man I couldn't get Nancy over 'er workn' the registrar to sell me no beer."

"Daamn...."

"Hell she knows my dad lets me drink and 'at bitch still wont sell me any I aw'ta go back over there and jack dat bitch up for some fuckn' brew"

"Hey Tobi ya don't know where I might score a bag do ya?"

"Hell Grundy when d'ya start smokn' at shit?"

"I been smokn' for a while...." Grundy lied.

"I could sell ya a joint."

"How much?"

"Ten spot."

"Ah'ight." Grundy reached into his car to get the money.

'What a fuckn' goof' Tobi thought to himself. When Grundy stepped back with the money Tobi said "hey there's one condition. You got to smoke it with me. And right here too I ain't got no time ta be driven' round town smoken' this joint. Cause man this is good shit. Red-daired fire weed. I say 'damn this shit 'll light yo world."

"ah...Alright. What time is it?"

"How the hell am I supposed 'a know? I look like a fuckn' clock ta yo fucked up ass. Shit man I don't know if you need to smoke this or not you might freak da fuck out."

It started getn' dark as Grundy sat in Tobis car watchn' him roll the joint. The traffic began to slow down. Maybe only one or two cars passed by. Nancy from across the street was havin' a smoke as she swept up leaves and cigaret butts up through spit, grease and bubble gum from around the gas pumps. The outside lights at the handy mart had all turned on and a couple of the street lights started sizzln' and bugs where flyn' all around 'em. Grundy was lookn' at the mess of red, green blue and yellow wires that Tobi had runn' long the floor of the car. All of them where for his radio. He'd taken the back seat out so he could put a box with two MTX ten inch woofers and two tweets in a grey carpeted cabinet in its place. He slid them forward so that they took up the room where the back to the seat was. He spent all of his spare time, time other than sitn' in school dreamn' about his car and smoken' dreamn' about his car, and 'bout all the girls that's gonna' want him when they seen how cool he was, that's what's behind this big knot of wires lose bolts rattln' trunk and windows with the tent bubbling up. Grundy wasn't quite sure what to make of all of this. He picked up a tape out of the black plastic tape case that sat in the floor 'Rob Bass' "cool" Tobi said "have you heard his new stuff?"

"Naw, I ain't ever listened much to rap?"

"You got a light" Tobi said making the motion of lighting the joint.

"Ah...yeah, I got one in my car I'me get it."

Grundy got back in Todis car and handed him the light.

"Dis's why I got my windows tinted for. Can't nobody see you but you can see them. Like dat fuckn' bitch sweeping the fuckn' ground she's a stupid fuckn' ho"

They smoked the joint. Tobi got high. Grundy didn't but he did get ta figitn' and said he had to cut. Tobi started talkn' a bunch 'a shit bout his car. Grundy left Tobi in the parkn' lot. Nancy was back in the store. Some little kid with brown dirt on it's face came in and bought a dumb-dumb. It's blond hair was curly an' all frizzy. Nancy smiled, at the little dirt ball, lett'n' his little puff of wind out her nose. She was lookn' at the black bottoms of its bare feet as the little kid pushed the door half way open with one dirty hand. The other holdn' the dumb-dumb in its mouth as it slid through the sliver of the heavy door. It made Nancy jump cause she thought the kid might get its fingers smashed in the door. But before she got around the end of the counter, to push the door open, the little kid was out the door. She watched it climb into a brown car that needed a muffler and missn' a front bumper. She emptied an ashtray and sat

down behind the counter.

Space and stupid fucks

He hadn't seen his friend in six months so when they were sitting in the pub ordering rounds of beer and tequila life was good. When his friend went to the can he started talking to a middle-aged lady who sat next to him at the bar. At least fifteen years older than himself. He was 23. She was sitting too close to him and so when his friend got back he started cracking on him. Hey how much did she say she coasts. L'me in on a little. Ha 40 years old. Ask her if she's working and tell her you are too. Then say that you'll trade sex with her.

"Man shut the fuck up" he said.

"you want another beer?" said his friend.

"yeah lets get a table. I'll get the next round" he walked down to an open table, pool table, reached into his pocket to get the usual \$1.00, four case quarters, and found that the table was only \$.50. a new favorite bar was born. Two hours of rolling the cue ball on the felt and shooting shit with the middle-aged woman and it was time to go. It was a straight shot from the bar back to his friends house where his wife and kid were waiting for his return on thier five year anaversery. They thought his wife would be pissed. But he was going to take to shit for his friend being out drinking. He knew that it wouldn't happen if anything was going to be said then it would be said out of his presence. At least his friend was with him and not out with some other girl. But sometimes usually more times than not someone is going to see the bad in the situation and not the good. The whole goddamned world knows that, but still they go on looking at the bad. When they pulled into the drive way there was another car sitting in the drive way. It belonged to a friend of his wives.

Well his friend and his wife were going to stop drinking and soon go to bed. He wasn't ready and the friend of his buddys wife was headn' to a bar down town. So he got in the car she had to stop by and pick up a friend of hers. They got the friend. He was dressed like it was some date or something. Maybe it was. So he asked if he was intruding. They said no. If people don't wont you somewhere they should tell you instead of letting you stick around and then getting pissed at you for it latter. I mean no one is a fucking mind reader. So they get to the bar he's drunk their sober he couldn't tell. He got a beer and found them sitting outside at a table. They all three sat there under the vines and statues in the back court of the bar. It was some yuppie type place. Her friend was drinking Long Island iced tea, through a straw. It's to prevent cavities, he said. There was just something about a guy drinking Long Island iced tea through a straw that just didn't seem right. So on the third drink he asked for a drink of the tea and yanked the straw out. And somewhere in this paragraph all hell come bubbling up through the ground. He wasn't quite sure when or where it all went wrong, but he kept trying to look at the good. Damned it he tried through beer and tequila he strained to keep himself sane. He struggled with this all the way back to her friends house.

When life is almost over all lives must be more alike; he was thinking as they pulled into the driveway.

Her friend invited them in and (what the fuck was he doing here. Was he looking for something? He didn't really know these people and now seeing the inside of this guys house with all the weight benches and guitars and electronic equipment) then looked at the weight benches. The weights were stacked on heavy. He sat down on the couch and the girl sat down next to him and started showing him an astronomy magazine she was

pointing out the pictures that she thought were pretty. That's when the inevitable happened. He saw the stars and the girls face and the stars and her friend who now when in brighter light was pretty big, who it just so happened was staring at him as he looked at the stars with the girl. And the beer and the tequila and the straw that he yanked out of his glass and the blankness of the moments leading up to this one and.... and fuck he just wanted to leave, but now the guy was getting real jumpy and wanting to go to the store for more beer. Which he was fine with, but the girl was reluctant. And the guy got more pushy and she slid over closer to him and the stars and her face and all the blankness in the night and a big dumb looking fucker sitting staring at him. The guy was wanting the girl and she was moving away from him towards a skinny drunk guy with funny clothes. The guy started giving her a back rub despite her objections to it, but the guy wouldn't stop. She laughed and the guy laughed. And then something was said about him being shot in the leg one time. Then he showed the scar. The entry point was a pin hole in a dogs ass compared to the exit. Where the bullet left his leg it took almost his entire calf with it. and to repair it they had to remove some muscles from his stomach and attach them where his calf muscle used to be. So now there was part of his stomach on his leg, but it still looked like his stomach. Damn. Poor mother fucker. To live life with your stomach swn to your leg. You could still see the shape of the stomach muscles. A three pack on his calf. Poor bastard. So eventually the girl gave in and decided to take him to the store. They all three went outside and the guy stepped around the side of the house to take a piss and the girl turn to our friend and said get in the front seat lets get out of here. What your friends not coming; he said. No he's being weird; she said. All right. But the guy was standing in the middle of the drive way as they were making their escape.

"what.... what you were going to leave me."

"no I was going to bring the beer back I thought you were staying"

"I'mc in I'll ride with you and then you and him can go do whatever you want."

....shit, they where riding in the car our friend was in the front seat and the guy in the back the girl was driving. It was a normal drive. Until they guy reached up into the front seat with a chain choker and wrapped it around our friends neck choking him. At which point our friend freaked the fuck out and pull at the choker as hard as he could. Finally getting it free from around his neck and turning around in his seat so the fucker couldn't get at him. The poor bastard had seen the choker break when he pulled to from around his neck.

"you stupid son of a bitch what the fuck do you think your doing you want to fucking choke me fuck you"

"gi'me back my necklace before I kick your ass."

"fuckn shove it up your ass mother fucker.... What the fuck are you fucking doing....stupid son of a bitch"

"give it back my friend gave it to me."

"fuck you and your goddamned fruitcake friend."

The girl just kept driving no one was listening to what she was saying. They pulled into the parking lot of the store like that. But when she said, "what kind of beer do you want?" everyone shut up. Then resumed. With the whole I'll kick your ass type shit. Our friend was too drunk to stand and figured if he stayed seated in the car with this guy then the guy would try to come at him and being that the guy was so much bigger than him he would probably smash him into the floor. At which point our friend realized this

is why someone shot this mother fucker. He was probably shot by some smaller guy in self defense. And damned it if our friend didn't have a knife with a five inch blade in his pocket. Great straight to jail. So how you wanna' go at the hands and blood of this stupid fuck or walking down the street. He chose the street.

He didn't make it across the parking-lot when the girl pulled up along side of him and asked if he would please get in the car. He said, no, he'd rather walk, but she looked like she was trying to tell him something with her eyes. May be he put it there. Who knows.

Well anyway he rode with them back to the guys house. Drunk.

Right when the guy hit him that's when everything went haywire. And a rusted dust fell on the grass along side of the house and on the hood of the car. The night was like a sand blaster across the horizon of an old beat up Jeep CJ--7 or so he was thinking through a 12 pack and tequila shots.

Then he hears someone laughing and he sees that the girl is talking to him. She was saying something about not being scared to go where you want to take what you can from the moment....and he wonders.... stars in the sky and all that shit ain't ever gonna' be seen.... the girl had her tongue in his mouth.... all the stars in the sky and.... someone across the street lights a cigarette to cling to life. A ritual of the damned.

A tale of Easter in the Southland.

Why in the hell is there a coca-cola machine on the back porch of this house? It's a greek order a sorority or a frat house. (I found out the other day that this building is actually a boarding house.) Your always gonna find stuff like this in a town centered around a college. Maybe they just don't want to walk to the store to grab their cokes. It's strange cause Auburn Alabama is not some metropolis. Pot bellies perfume store bought tans and beer. That life no good. Maybe the beer though....

I used to walk with my head down a good bit. So naturally I was always looking at the ground. On this one particular night. Me and my friend, Adam, were walking his dog, Mingus. It was Easter night what else was there for us to do. This seemed like the best option.

....we were walking across a parking lot in the back of the house with a coke machine all lit up on the back porch. The parking lot was covered with pea-gravel. It was the kind of job where they lay tar and then back the gravel down into the tar. Some of the gravel had come lose and I could feel it move under my feet. I was sliding my feet as I walked kicking the lose gravel across the parking lot watching it tumble and, bounce crooked lines across the lot and land in the grass.

The dog was named Mingus after the bad ass bass player. He is a dog he is. Mingus sticks close to Adam. I think all three of us were kicking at the gravel.

The smell of the southern air creeps through your clothes and into your skin. It's like walking in a dark sonna cooled down a bit by the night and flavored with leaves of oak trees, kuduzer and poplar. Yeah maybe some sweet gum too. This air reminds you that you have arm-pits and balls. Hot days and cool steamy nights causes your body to stick to itself.

The weather doesn't bother Mingus. He is a dog. Neither does time, but it was about 11 p.m.

We take a left and walk down on the left side of the street. Brick retaining walls tree stumps and trash cans boarder the sidewalk. We walk on down the street a few lights. We hear the sound of wood striking wood. And some human grunting sounds. Our eyes are pulled across the street by these sounds and the sight of a white guy with black hair, he looked kinda' big, like a football player or something. He was swinging a 4x4 slab of wood out in the yard in front of some other frat type place....the house had one light shining on

the front yard. There were three Easter crosses standing in the yard. The green grass shades over into black in the shadows around the corners of the house. A sidewalk carries from the street up to the front steps, that lead up to the porch. The house is of red brick. The mortar lines rise above the black bushes, colorless bushes. I'm red and green color blind and this can have good points as well as bad. Cause I have to guess sometimes if things are brown or red or some shade of green. The bricks, as I imagine are red, the shadow falling on them makes them seem brown, shades of brown, red, green everything else except for the white guy and the light on the porch is night. And there was a tree to the right of the porch that was blocking my view of what this guy was doing. I see him swing the 4x4 and the sound of wood hitting wood. Then he drops the 4x4.

Adam said "Hey, he's tearing down a cross."

"Oh shit!" I said trying to muffle my laughter.

The white guy starts pulling at one of the horizontal beams of one of the three crosses that were standing in the yard. He was trying to tear down a cross at 11 p.m. on Easter Sunday. Then I guess he either saw us or thought that he was making too much noise, or maybe his master called him back in for a T.V. dinner or something, but he turned and on the balls of his feet with his back arched arms out to his sides he goes up the stairs half running and half bouncing. He staggered towards the right hand rail pushed off of it and.... he's drunk....no....he lights on the porch. Glances over his shoulder. Head hug. Back arched. The balls of his feet look like hooves as they move him into the house. We hear the sound of the screen door as it closes behind him.

By this time we were standing across the street staring at this house. Laughing our asses off. There's a cross broken in half, 4x4s scattered in the yard, greenblackgrassbrownbushes under the front porch light. Mingus never barked.

What the fuck. We walked down the sidewalk took another left and went up the street.

When we got to the next intersection, which happens to be the main one in the town we ran into a guy named Nole. We asked him what he was up to he said "...that.." he raised his arm and pointed at a chrome urinal attached with rope and string to a brick column.

"What is it for?"

"That!" he puts his hands in his pockets and lets his shoulders sag. We stand there on the corner; three guys and a dog, staring at a chrome urinal.

"Tierra - 14@hotmail.com"

Read: Spider F.O.M. GAMMA G.
ANY comic book ^{or ANY words on} ANYTHING
THANKS: Spectrum, Thatchhut,
The cribbs

