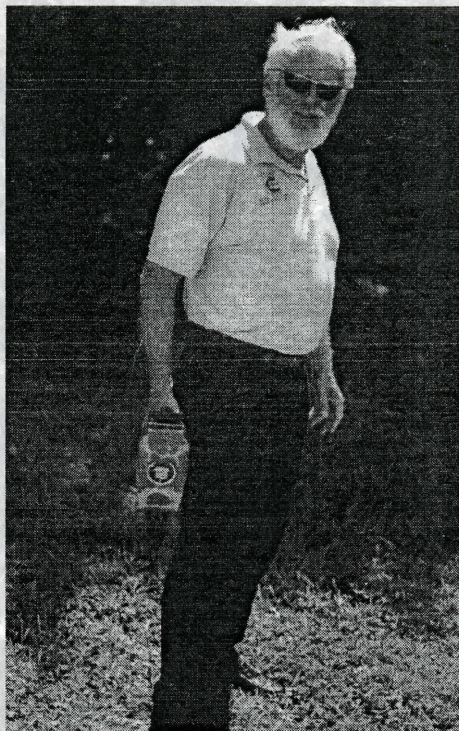


\$2.00  
issue #1

# Talk Story

the best literature seeping up from the underground



FEATURING

**LUCKY ... LUCKY?**

A SHORT STORY BY TODD TAYLOR

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**FEATURING**  
**LUCKY ... LUCKY?**  
**A SHORT STORY BY TODD TAYLOR**

Talk Story is a production of Gorsky Press. It is released six times annually. We release high quality fiction that would otherwise be ignored. We like stories about drinking, drugs, sex, punk rock, and asshole protagonists, as long as those stories have a point ("drinking, drugs, sex, punk rock, and asshole protagonists are bad" does not count as a point). The photographs contained herein are not intended to illustrate the story. They are included solely to add to the mood of the story. Plus, everyone likes books with pictures. Photo creds are as follows: photos on pages 3, 11 by Felinor Vidad, photos on pages 15, 18, 21, 25, and 34 by Sean Carswell, photo on page 41 by Todd Taylor, and the rest of the photos could've been taken by a number of people, but we're not sure who did what. Sean Carswell can be contacted by email at [gorskyco@aol.com](mailto:gorskyco@aol.com). Todd Taylor can be contacted care of *Flipside*, PO Box 60790, Pasadena, CA 91116. For anything else, please contact us at:

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**Sean Carswell**

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## **Saturday Night at the Harbor: an editorial**



**I** recently went to Hawaii, which is shocking for someone of my economic class, especially considering that I'm neither part of the armed forces nor a member of the merchant marines. Before going, Hawaii was part of a vague recollection in my mind of an un-air conditioned Florida junior high school classroom where the underpaid teacher had snuck outside for a fifteen minute smoke break in the middle of class; two redneck kids fought in the back of the classroom, waking me up and keeping me up so I sketched pictures of waves from Surfer magazine, pictures of guys like Shaun Tompson or

Gerry Lopez dropping in on the pipe while riding twin fin, Lightning Bolt boards.

I waded through those junior high days trying not to get involved in the myriad daily fights, (mostly between the north Merritt Island trailer park kids and the central Merritt Island ghetto kids, but often spilling over into the more easily defined categories of black versus white, which made it more dangerous for me, seeing as how my skin was more or less one of those colors), reading comics in Gifted English class, and learning about Columbus's discovery of America and the fairly recent American victory in Vietnam. I'd also learned to surf during my seventh grade year, and I dreamed of spending that summer surfing, all the while knowing that I'd spend that summer working construction. Concrete classroom walls seemed to sweat and the linoleum desktops cracked as the wooden desks swelled in the heat and I thought of Hawaii, where every girl looked like the models in an OP ad, where every surfer got a chance to slip into an overhead barrel, where someday I'd land.

Eighteen years out of the seventh grade, still dreaming of spending summers surfing, still knowing that rent is a precarious sum to generate monthly without at least the occasional day of construction labor in the Florida sun (master's degree be damned). Now I'm a part-time community college English teacher who can barely muster up the energy to pass out comic books to my students, who feels like I'm giving the college too much for their money if I actually teach, and I'm well below the tax bracket of people who summer in the Pacific Islands (though I am seated comfortably in the tax



bracket of people who qualify for food stamps). For more or less five years, my girlfriend Felizon has put up with my daydreaming passivity until, finally, she put up enough money for both of us to go back to her hometown on the North Shore of Oahu.

Felizon and I spent ten days exploring her home state of Hawaii. I finally met her father, who filled me with endless stories of a life laboring for the sugar cane plantation, of a long lost civil engineering degree from a university in Manila, of chicken fights in Mill Camp, of raising five children, and of his struggles saturated in forty years of heavy drinking. He also let me drive his hot rod Pontiac Grand Prix. Of course, he was my kind of guy. Felizon's parents fed us more Filipino food than we could possibly digest and more stories of Filipino culture than we could possibly ingest. In times away from her childhood home in Paalaa Kai, Felizon took me around to the Hawaiian microcosms of the Philippines, Korea, Japan, China, and so on. We took pictures of Japanese tourists taking pictures of King Kamehameha's statue. We wandered through botanical gardens and checked out a waterfall under the light of the full moon. We made friends with a six year-old girl with leukemia. We snacked on all kinds of local foods: kal bi, manapua, poi, kalua pork, lomilomi salmon, and dinar dira'an. We listened to a Tongan master drummer and watched Tahitian girls dance. We tried to avoid everything that was typically mainland American, especially the tourists, and got frustrated when we couldn't.

But this isn't a vacation story. I have a point.

We spent our first night, second-to-last night, and last night in Hawaii hanging out at the harbor in Hale'iwa with Felizon's brother, Felinor, and his friends. The first night, when Felinor told me that he and his friends hung out at the harbor and drank juice, I guessed that he was using "juice" as a euphemism. He wasn't. They really did hang out in the parking lot of Hale'iwa Boat Harbor, drinking Hawaiian Sun Orange Lilikoi or Strawberry Passion fruit juice, staring across the calm harbor waters and out to the ocean, and "talking story."

The first night when I hung out at the harbor, I really enjoyed myself. The slow pace was just right for my travel fatigued state of mind, the ocean had a soothing glassiness, and Felinor and his friends told entertaining stories. At first they were somewhat guarded towards me (except Roy, but we'll get to him later). Maybe it was because I was a "haole" from the mainland (and haoles from the mainland tend to be loud, obnoxious bastards), maybe it was because I've dated one of their friends' kid sister for five years without giving her even an engagement ring (which I gathered is a bad thing in the eyes of a local boy), probably it was a combination of both. Either way, I didn't let it bother me. I listened to their stories and joined in when it seemed necessary and didn't worry too much about winning them over. I left looking forward to meeting up with them again.

The second-to-last night, Felizon and Felinor wandered out of earshot and discussed private family business. Roy and I stayed in our beach chairs and talked story. Roy is an easy guy to get along with. He's a native Hawaiian right



down to the blood in his veins, and he has a humble kindness that makes him a friend right away. He told me a bit about his love life and a bit about the waves during the winter and a bit about growing up with Felinor, then he stopped in the middle of one sentence and said, "Do you hear that?" I listened. A four wheel drive truck drove across the gravel harbor parking lot. Faint traces of reggae filtered over from Hale'iwa Joe's; the voices of kids partying at the other end of the harbor drifted over. Other than that, I heard nothing. Roy said, "I think there's waves."

I figured that he was pulling my leg, even though he didn't really seem like the leg pulling type. We kept talking. Ten minutes later I heard it. There were waves. At midnight, I left the harbor with plans to meet Roy at six AM for a surf session.

Though I surf often, I'm not a surfer. I'm nothing like Jeff Spicoli or like the blond, arrogant, in-crowd stereotype. I never have been. I rarely ride a short board. I almost never hot dog. I generally paddle out where the waves are a little smaller but at least they're less crowded. By the same token, although I'm not a surfer, surfing is very important to me. When I surf, I tend to forget my problems, but when I'm done surfing, I tend to understand my problems better. It's like hypnotherapy, I guess, only surfing is really fucking fun.

Surfing with Roy helped me in this way. The waves weren't the monsters that the North Shore is famous for. All week, Waimea Bay had been flat. All week, the Pipeline had been flat. All week, five guys fought for every ripple at Sunset Beach. Six AM that morning, though, Roy and I carried

longboards across the street from his house and surfed clean, waist-high waves. We were the only ones out. Set waves rolled in every five or ten minutes. At first, we caught a bunch of waves. One other surfer paddled out. We made another friend. A sea turtle fed off the reef that we surfed above. Rain clouds cast long morning shadows across the Waianae Mountain Range all the way down to Kaena Point. A couple of times, Roy caught me staring at the mountains and kidded me for daydreaming. Hell, I'm from Florida. All I get to see when I look back at the shore in Cocoa Beach is pink condominiums blocking out the sunset. Roy surfed in the classic longboard style of his father and grandfather. He coolly strolled back and forth on his ten foot longboard, stayed right atop the redwood stringer, and called out his doppelganger of Duke Kahanomoku. I rode his twelve-foot longboard. It forced me to give up my lingering short board tendencies, to swing big bottom turns and run feet up to the nose. I adapted quickly.

When I left the water, I came to understand something about the harbor, about Hawaii, about haoles, about cultures lost and cultures gained.

My hometown is a shell of what it used to be. The Merritt Island culture of my childhood is gone, stripped away and replaced by Chili's, Office Depot, and Wal-Mart Supercenter. The last bit of wetlands on Merritt Island has recently been dredged up to make way for a BJ's Wholesale Outlet. The loss of this hometown is a major theme of my first novel.



My heritage is a shell of what it used to be. Although I know I'm of some kind of European descent, I don't know what part of Europe I descend from. Sean is an Irish name, but that doesn't make me Irish. For all I know, Carswell is just something some guy on Ellis Island made up. I know my family didn't come over on the Mayflower. I know I'm not indigenous to Florida. The constant sunburn and burgeoning skin cancer prove that. Locals in Hawaii make no distinctions between the heritage of white people. White people are all haoles. The only distinction is whether or not you're a fucking haole. A fucking haole is a white person who has benefited enough off the American Wal-Mart Supercenter economy to be able to afford to vacation in Hawaii, but spends his whole time bitching about the lack of bagels and Starbucks (though there are plenty of both in Hawaii). I probably despise fucking haoles more than most. My years of building houses for fucking haoles (combined with my loss of culture and heritage) has led to a personal class grudge that's probably deeper than the one carried by most local Hawaiians.

The local boys at the harbor, though, made distinctions between every Asian and Pacific Island ethnicity. They knew the stereotypes for Koreans, Japanese, Filipino, Chinese, Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan, and so on. A lot of these distinctions are a throwback from the early sugar cane plantation days, when the fucking haole landowners separated laborers according to their ethnicity, then encouraged disputes between the different ethnicities (in the same way the people in power always turn workers against each other: they paid varying degrees of crap wages depending on where the laborer

was from, they spread rumors geared to incite fights and prejudices, and so on. But I digress). A lot of these distinctions come from the natural desire of people to hang on to their heritage, to maintain the good parts of their traditional culture and blend that with modern life on Hawaii. This is most apparent in the local pidgin dialect. All the guys out at the harbor spoke pidgin. Felizon's parents and extended family all spoke heavy pidgin. Felizon spoke it again after one night at the harbor.

When I first heard the Hawaiian-style pidgin, it sounded simple to me. When Felizon took time to point out the words I didn't know, and I realized that pidgin borrowed from Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiian, and all the other cultures that made up the plantation labor force, I respected it. Rather than sticking to the forced language of their boss (or their conqueror, depending on how radical you want to get here), the local working class defiantly made their own common language. It may seem like a tiny victory, but its cultural significance is as important as any other successful labor uprising. Take, for example, the phrase "talking story." When the guys hang out at the harbor, they talk story. When the same kind of guys hang out on the mainland and do the same thing, they bullshit. The term "bullshitting" suggests that your time spent telling of the important fragments of your life amounts to the same value as the feces of a farm animal. It's a term I never really thought about before, and though it doesn't have great significance, it does subtly demean the act of sharing experiences. To talk story (though it may be syntactically awkward) suggests that your idle hours of



conversation are actually more than that. Your fragments of life are important, and the stories you tell encapsulate the traditions of your heritage, and the good parts of these traditions adapt to the modern world.

*Talk Story*, as a zine, will hopefully take the tradition of Saturday night at the Hale'iwa Boat Harbor and share the experience with the scattered people of the underground who may be interested.



## Business Stuff

With each issue, I'll present a story by a new, unpublished or unrecognized author. I'll probably ramble at the beginning because, what the hell, I like to talk story too.

You'll notice that there are no advertisements. That's because I don't want to go down that fucking haole road. You'll notice that there is a catalog of the stuff available from Gorsky Press. Don't feel that you have to buy anything to stay on the mailing list. This ain't a Starbucks. You can hang out whether you're a paying customer or not. If you received this in the mail, that means you probably did something nice for me or bought something from me (which is doing something nice for me) or wrote a cool zine or did any combination of these things. This zine is my way of saying thank you. If you like it and feel like sending your next zine to me by way of trade, or you want to send me stamps, I'll take whatever, but, again, the Starbucks crack applies. If you don't want to receive this anymore, please let me know. My feelings won't be hurt, and I won't have to buy as many stamps. If, on the other hand, you paid money for this and want to start receiving this in the mail, do something nice for me, send me your zine, or send me ten dollars (or the equivalent in stamps) for the next six issues.

If you're an unpublished or unrecognized author and you want to send me a story or two, I'd be glad to read it. If I like it, I'll publish it. If I sent you this zine for free, chances are pretty good that I did it because I respect and enjoy your writing and I'd like to publish it. Also, most of the photographs are by me, and I'm a pretty lousy photographer. The only thing that saves me is my lousy printer smear all of my out of focus pictures. And if you think that's bad, you should see my artwork. It looks like it was done by a seven year-old mental patient. So, I'd welcome any photographs or artwork you want to send me.



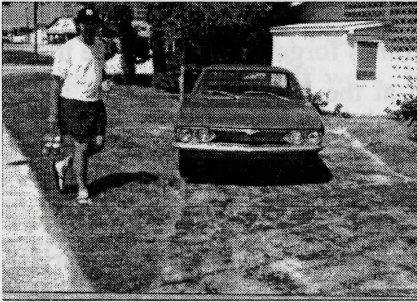
## About the Author

The first story for this zine comes from Todd Taylor. Todd's one of the two guys who put out *Flipside*. Besides that, he's one of the most talented writers I know of. About five years ago, before he started with *Flipside*, Todd wrote a handful of disturbingly funny stories. He sent three of those stories to me. All three stories were great, but one story I couldn't get out of my head. It was about two guys who lived in a house that butted up to a baseball field. As the weight of life combined with the frustration of nightly broken windows, these guys started to slip, if not over the edge, awfully close to it. I hung on to that story through eight different residences in four different towns (don't ask me to count how many jobs). Periodically, I'd dig through all my papers and find this story and read it and laugh all over again. Often, I'd laugh hardest when Todd's story was too true to be funny. When I decided to start this zine, there was no doubt in my mind what story I wanted to start it with. Luckily, no other publisher got his hands on it. Hence, we have "Lucky...Lucky?" I'm sure you'll enjoy it as much as I have.

**Todd Taylor**

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## LUCKY... LUCKY?



“Got your hard hat?” Henry asked without looking up.

There was some shuffling, some balancing, and a man, Willey, emerged from the sliding glass window, facial features hidden

under the brimmed shadow of a plastic construction helmet.

Henry turned around. “I see you brought your own, silky boy. Nice floral print.”

Willey sat down. A girl who he’d dated up until the day before had airbrushed his name on it and flourished it with lilacs. She missed the primarily masculine nature and purpose of the skull bucket. The bitch of it was she unfortunately knew a lot about adhesive shellac and he hadn’t been able to rub it off with acetone or sandpaper. Tomorrow he’d use a belt sander.

Cupped in Willey’s right hand was a freshly made margarita in a plastic tumbler the size of a full-grown Chihuahua. In the other was a sports bottle with a core of melting ice.



Henry had a head start on the drinking. The shining corpses of evacuated Pabst Blue Ribbon were neatly stacked in a pyramid by the end of his prostrate lawn chair. He had the day off in celebration of his two-year anniversary of his divorce and welcomed the introspection provided by alcoholic lubrication.

"You know, I used to like baseball," Henry said, no longer looking at Willey. "Playing it, I mean."

This conversation had the wear marks of a good pair of Levi's. The more they wore it and tried it on for size, sometimes modifying it, sometimes forgetting details, the truth of it seemed to wear through at the kneecaps. Most of their conversations took months to get through. Few were ever completed.

"I even had a winning season," Henry continued.

Both men peered over their shoulders to Henry's kitchen window. Under a dead hanging plant was a baseball trophy. It was a foot tall piece of gold-painted plastic bolted onto polished granite from Tennessee. Normal fare. On the top was a little leaguer poised for a ball that never came. His wait had been so long and the summers so hot that the tip of his bat had been affected by the heat. It sagged like a used Q-tip.

"Didn't make it out of T-ball," Willey said. "That's as far as it went coed and I've always found it easier to hit a stationary target. I didn't want to get beamed by a pitcher so I quit. Picked up badminton."

The sun cast shadows that became longer with each word. The light lost some of its vigor and the shadows fell more bruise blue than black. There were still two good hours before the sun would drown on the western horizon.

Both men settled into their cushions of shared silence. Henry, who'd been air conditioned most of the day, felt the

heat of Willey's body when he plunked down next to him. The cross-hatched material of his lawn chair sagged, quickly imprinting what would look like waffle iron marks on his doughy skin when he got up next.

"How was your day?" They felt almost married to one another. Two years at the same house, joined by the semi-sweet, golden handcuff blend of success and failure of having a job, paying bills, and buying stuff.

"Funny thing, coming over here," Willey said. He picked bug parts off his prescription sunglasses. He licked the lenses clean. "I thought I was going to die. I was like a moving vehicular Moses. Got off work, hopped on the bike, crossed four lanes of traffic -- in rush hour -- without having to wait a friggin' second, and made it here on all green lights. Fifteen green lights. Not even a yellow. It was like I had cop lights that everyone could see but me that were controlled by a supersecret electronic transmitter in my butt. Usually, I'm a damn commando of the middle lane, rushing into red lights with people wanting to cozy up to me in my lane without even looking."

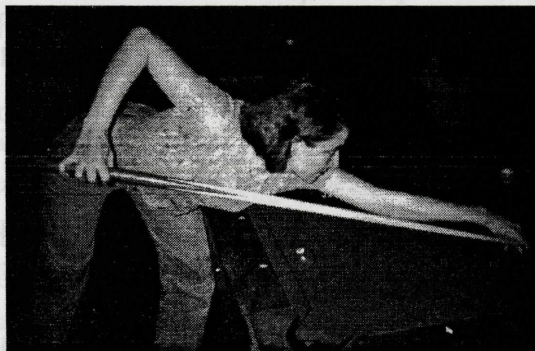
"Yeah," Henry said, "Sometimes I'm close to stripping down the Oldsmobile and looking for the stealth button. People drive like dipshits here. They go through an intersection then look for oncoming traffic."

"They seem genuinely surprised and irritated when they have to come to a full stop," Willey said. "So, I'm a bit early."

Willey took a long, choppy series of gulps off the margarita. The top lip of the tumbler hit his forehead, leaving behind a small frown of rough grain salt. "How was your date last night? With Stephanie, right? It's been a while."



"Different Stephanie. And I've got an amendment to the Henry Rzpicha Dating Constitution. No more girls named Stephanie. Two times shame on me. Two down the tubes. She dumped me at the beginning of the date so I spent the money going to the movies. Got extra popcorn with the cash."



"Didn't know there was such a beast as Stephanie Number Two. What was her reason?" Willey asked, pulling more of the margarita down his throat, wanting to make up for lost ground. They communicated best on similar levels of insobriety.

"I'm just convinced that all women I've met have the same book of kiss-off speeches. They don't even take the time to personalize it," Henry said.

"So she wants to be your friend?" Willey asked. "The type of 'good friend' that never returns your calls, always musters a semi-valid excuse, says she wants to be alone yet will remind you of her current boyfriend in all future conversations?"

"Bingo."

"Tell her 'Honey, I don't need a friend. I was hoping for a nice, solid fuck,'" Willey advised.

"I don't get it. I'd respect them more if they said, 'Henry, it's you. I can't stand you. You suck and here's why.' I'd take notes, change what I wanted. You know, some didactic help, not just feeeeeelings. If a bum in Safeway asks me, 'Can you spare some quarters, I need a pint,' I give it to him. Honesty. A little integrity, that's what I'm looking for."

The little league field they faced slowly began to glow like a specialty plate under a heat lamp at Furr's cafeteria. Although it was still daylight, the familiar pop of warming-up stadium-style lights turned into solid electrical humming. It was the sound of a huge bug zapper; big enough to sizzle airplanes. A small slice of American pie. There was excitement in the air. Palpable.

The night before, a kid with more than a modicum of artistic talent and a variety of nozzle tips had snuck up to the high stucco fence that faced the municipal field and hissed paint into the words "Home Run" in dramatic, swoopy greens and silvers. It was punctuated like a Spanish sentence with arrows instead of exclamation points. The arrows pointed up, almost directly in line to the prostrate bodies of Henry and Willey, unbeknownst to both of them.

"Get a pry bar on the way home?" Henry asked.

"Picked one up on the way to work along with a wire cutter," Willey answered. "Figured I'd need 'em for the car sooner or later anyway."

After a long silence, they both glanced over to the fence, beyond the backyard pool, as if guided by the same string of an unseen puppeteer. Their gazes fixed on the large catapult fashioned out of surgical tubing and a bed pan. The



ends of the tubing were secured to the twelve-foot high metal posts, adorned at the top with cast-iron horse heads, and jutting seven feet over on each side of the back entrance gate that they never used. It was designed for tall boat house that had never been finished, Henry had figured. It was a mystery why they were split horizontally across the middle. In the middle of the sagging and jiggling tubing was a customized cup -- a bed pan from Willey's work. At the top of it, Henry had taken a plasma torch and masterfully cut off the space where a patient's butt would traditionally sit. It was a deep dish that would assure that projectiles, regardless of nefarious intent, wouldn't ricochet back and damage the person launching it.

It hung like bikini bottoms for some semi-giant woman with a bladder control problem.

"Set her up again half an hour before you came over," Henry said. "Added a couple more feet of tubing and I'm feeling lucky tonight. Figure if we get the range dialed, we can hit home base. I also bungeed the top half of the doors open for a little less restriction of arc."

"Looks nice. No wonder it seemed a little more spacious back here," Willey replied, looking at the bottom of his beige tumbler, half wondering where the margarita had gone. His head felt light, his movements more free. He got up, tipped a little. "Going in to freshen up. You need another Pabst?"

"Better bring out two."

"All right chief."

Willey opened the sliding glass door, which hadn't been there yesterday. There were no water stains on it from the

sprinklers and it rolled with barely a sound on a freshly greased track. Willey stepped into the cool body of air in the house. One foot in and one foot out, he asked "You want me to get the breast plates? The drinking may affect some of our distance judgment skills."

"That's why you get paid the big bucks. You're doing the thinking," Henry said. "Know where I put them?"

"Left of the workbench, under the rag drawer?"

"Right."

Willey walked into the garage and without turning on the light with the aluminum pie tin lampshade and grabbed the two motocross breastplates resembling the shedded exoskeletons of large, neon insects. He revitalized his tumbler, half surprised that the bottle of Herradura was half drained, and hoping it would really kick him in the head any time soon. He was both ashamed and proud of his tolerance as he palmed



two more Pabsts from the fridge. On the way back outside, he walked through the unadorned, white-washed front room bare except for a TV and VCR on a pedestal facing a worn-down couch that exhaled small puffs of stuffing. Even the carpet was white. It



made the room seem so big the furnishings became miniaturized.

From the perspective of a home owner, the sun was at its most depressing angle. The light made the holes in the stucco left from hard, fast-moving balls become more obvious than a field of pimples on a girl as she looks into a mirror two hours before the prom. Henry and Willey were both secretly waiting to see if the dimples would amount to a distinct image. Henry hoped it'd be Elvis or a flaming skull. Willey wished for Lee Meriwether or Mary Tyler Moore.

The impacted pattern was chaos theory visible, or a blender of nothing, or something art patrons would jizz themselves over. The pattern was nothing fully understandable. They'd tried to connect the dots. Nothing doing. Willey was hoping for a hit to the right of the sliding glass door, figuring that if a couple more clustered there, he could make a good case for the bust of Andre the Giant and Henry would grant permission to fill in the blanks.

Both arms wrapped around the chest plates, balancing one Pabst on the head of the other in a fore-shortened totem pole, Willey dropped them into Henry's waiting hand. They'd spent so much time together, Henry could visualize exactly where Willey was in the house: he knew from the sound of distinct doors opening, the brush of hard plastic on door frame, the dull clunk of ice in a tumbler, feet on tile, on carpet -- a radar in his head. He reached for and grabbed the Pabst without misjudging distance. The beers' wet tears of condensations kissed his palm. He popped one open and it foamed over.

"Like the new sliding glass door?" Henry asked as Willey carefully placed himself into his chair.

"Yeah. It rides smooth."

"I finally opened up a contractor's account at Builder's Square. Fifteen percent off since I'm a regular."

"Nice perk," Willey said. Willey's rent fluctuated. He was responsible for paying all the damages the house sustained.

"Little fuckers practiced this afternoon," Henry said. Dedicated, even at 104 degrees." He searched under his chair. His knuckles played and scraped along bas-relief pool tile. Henry produced a baseball. It was high quality, hand stitched in the USA, the word "Dunlop" reduced by a savage hit so it read "lop." "I figure, the first little freak to bat one into the yard tonight gets two back as a warning."

"Sounds good," Willey said.

"It'll make me feel better." Henry fought the impulse to stand up and pee in his own pool. "Got to wazz." He turned inside and brushed against the door jam as he sidled into the bathroom. The bathroom itself was almost large enough to hold a game of racquetball. It was the most ornate room in the house: half shrine, half testament to a losing bureaucratic battle-- like a history book opened to discreet pages and used as wallpaper. Each page was laminated to protect against the harmful effects of shower steam.

Henry pulled out his penis and began to pee, almost thinking in time with the rhythmic splattering of urine on the inner ridge of porcelain. Women, he thought he'd figured them out at twelve. He'd buy them in pages. With his first Penthouse



he was convinced that he could live without them as long as his right hand wouldn't fail. Painfully shy, pulling his monkey had been the bridge over the gap which breached between being alone and not feeling lonely. Lately, self loving had become less attractive, falling prey to some of the best canned beer the Midwest had to offer. He hummed a jingle that went along the lines "If you're out of Schlitz, you're out of beer." The urine stream continued, a thing of domestic-mythological proportions if there had been an audience or if Henry had paid attention. All he knew was that he was getting tired of standing.

He looked up and faced his past: carefully clipped casino-paid news features from the local Vegas section. Together they told a story of Harold K. Rzpicha -- thirty-seven, Henderson resident, Nevada native -- who walked into Sam's Town to cash his biweekly paycheck, and twice spun a raffle wheel segmented into a thousand pegged slices. He expected to drink his two complimentary whiskey sours, grab a burrito, then leave. Winning a house was an unexpected surprise.

Work had been thankless and tough that day -- bad transmission on an Audi, the type with the inclination to launch through the top levels of parking garages across this great land of ours back in 1989. His divorce had been officialized. He kept the Olds, the TV, and his couch. He wanted nothing to remind him of Larkin, he thought as the pegs on the big wheel clicked. She gave him a glass patio table because she hated it. "Thank god no children," he remembered mumbling as the wheel landed on a new Lewis Home. A

\$170,000 value in a good neighborhood. Henry had lived too long in Vegas to get excited over a thousand to one shot. If the two spins matched, he'd win. If not, then he'd go to Willey's and play Lawn Darts.

The flash bulbs didn't seem to end. His sight became blotchy and he suddenly felt like a poster child of a disease not yet discovered. Before it fully sunk in, Sam Boyd, the owner of the casino, was displaying a check the size of a queen bed cut in the silhouette of a house. They shook hands. Sam's grip felt icy and weak.

Henry was then doubly glad he was divorced. Larkin and her high maintenance hair would have wanted more than half of his new house. As he walked outside into the dark heat of a Vegas night, unClubbing his steering wheel, he looked up to the bleached marquee of his own face raining down on him in



a flood of rough, bulbed Technicolor. WINNER OF A NEW HOME: HAROLD. Henry moved into the house a week later. He even bought a Bible, thinking that divine forces were at work. He never opened it. Willey moved in a

month later. Two years later, they had yet to form a compelling reason to buy furniture.

Henry flushed, zipped, and walked back outside. "You know what Larkin said to me the first time she broke up with me?" Henry said to the back of Willey, freshly breastplated.



"Man, why'd you have to bring her up?" Willey asked. Larkin, the topic, usually carried sadness on its back.

"The shrine. I had to piss for a long time and my eyes just read without me thinking about it. She said on our very first date that we fit too well together, too quickly, and she was scared. Four days into the relationship, she said I drained her physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Sensory overload, she claimed."

"So what'd you say to her?" Willey asked.

"Said I understood the physical part. On our second date we had sex on my roof at least three times and drained a half bottle of the Reverend Jim Beam with no whiskey dick," Henry reflected. "Slept in so much that I got sunburn on my pecker. I hadn't even gotten out of first gear with her." The lines in his head deepened like pavement uprooted by a tree. "Then she didn't talk to me for six months. I told her I didn't need any more friends. I was busy hating the ones I had."

"Should have taken it as a signal," Willey said.

"Yeah, but what of? Why were you a vehicular deity this afternoon? To start drinking early? Is great sex the harbinger of a failed marriage? Six months later, without calling, she came back and fucked me in the kitchen while my roommate slept on the couch. Sue me. I'm a whore," Henry said.

The crack of a bat sounded like a cap gun. Both men swiveled their hard-hatted heads to the field. No ball came their way.

"Better put on your chest protector," Willey said.

Then came the distant cheering of parents smattered with the gruff noises of a coach taking his job too seriously.

"What number sliding glass door was that?" Willey asked as Henry clasped on his protection.

"Five. I'm thinking about investing in some of that glass they use at schools, the stuff with wire running through it. It should be pretty impact resistant," Henry answered.

More people filled the stands of the Pecos Legacy Park, Field Number Two, coolers in tow, big cups in their hands, sun visors clipped to heads accompanied by the slap of thongs on the bottom of feet. Some came to relive childhood fantasies, some to restrain their spouses from mauling the umpire. The suburbs provided little release from anxiety. However, it was Friday night and one of the unforgettable beauties of Clark County, Nevada is that there are no laws banning open containers in public areas.

Another crack of an aluminum bat against a red-stitched ball traveled through air. To both Henry and Willey, it was a time of accelerated anxiety.

A small, white ball against the patchwork of near night, when it traveled past the hood of floodlights, was about as easy to see as a star during the day.

"Maybe if the kids were required to use wood like the majors," Henry thought out loud, "there wouldn't be so much damage."

All things considered, Henry was taking the ball onslaught in stride. He had all the schedules for games, mostly Little League, a couple corporate, and like a muscle that tenses



before a blow, he didn't bruise easily. He was a mellow man, honed with a fine edge of creative motivation.

What Henry and Willey created was entertainment; nothing virtual about it -- fully interactive, community-based funtime. Besides, it circumvented any need for cable.

"Did you hear the cops nabbed and released old man Murphy yesterday?" Willey asked.

Murphy was Henry's high-strung neighbor, a man infinitely pissed, a man who stuck with the concept that anytime but the present and the future was incurably better. He took his retirement as serious business; his dream house was also under homerun siege and he took proactive steps to piss off the city in any way possible.

"What'd he do this time?" Henry asked.

"He started blasting away at the third baseman after the kid rocketed one into his living room when he was watching 'All in the Family.' Mrs. Rollins told me this morning when I was getting the paper," Willey replied.

"You could see it festering behind his eyes for a long time," Henry said. "He was about to go ballistic. Did the kid get seriously hurt?"

"No," Willey answered. "Rock salt grazed a thigh and his parents cell phoned the cops. Two minutes later, Murphy was cuffed for aggravated assault."

"But I've seen him tooling around his yard," Henry said.

"He's old. They let him walk on a little bail. Where's he going to run?" Part of Willey's head disappeared into his tumbler, not wanting it to warm up to the heat of the pavement.

He sucked a semi-arc of freezer-made ice, got up, and wandered into the bathroom. Dizzy, he sat down to pee and faced the other half of the expansive bathroom.

The far wall was dedicated to red tape: in the measured, bloated diction of politics, paragraph-long sentences stated that although the city had sympathy for Mr. Rzpicha's bombardment of leisure-time projectiles, one immutable fact remained: the park had been built before his house. Henry accepted this fact a little better than most of the people on the periphery of the municipal development recently dubbed "the Killing Field." Henry had written the letters more as an amusing project, not expecting the city to move his house to a clime less saturated with the sounds of kids having fun.

Wiley spun. He grabbed for the toilet paper, remembered that he was only peeing, flushed, and rebuckled. He walked back outside and instead of bowing under the margarita, reached for the bottle that had accompanied him at work. He knew summer was almost over. Daily, he would freeze a 44 oz. label-less Gatorade bottle of water over night to take to work when he drove the ambulance. The ice would slowly melt throughout the day, providing him a continually cold beverage. A lifesaver. Today was the first he had returned home with a small core of ice in the middle of the bottle. He took a big gulp. It chased and pushed the sugar coating of the margarita down his throat.

"Gonna zip up your pecker or are you anxious to show the baseball moms your religion?" Henry asked.

Wiley zipped up, chuckling, making sure he didn't catch any flesh. "Any activity?"



"Bottom of the third," Henry said, standing at the wall, lowering his gaze from a pair of binoculars "But the Ramirez kid's been batting way over .500 this season. Little monster's 5'6" and only twelve. After this beer, you want to start heckling the center fielder?"

Willey nodded as he drank some more of his cold water. It felt good. It was human fuel.

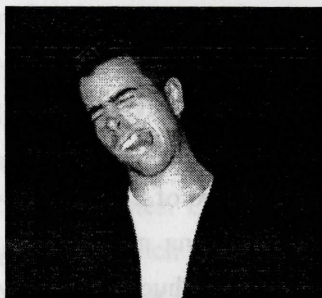
George Ramirez wound up, knowing full well that if he connected with a little upswing, he could clear the net. He'd paced the distance a week before during practice. About 219 feet. He looked up and over the net and brick wall, between the sixth and seventh skinny pine trees where he figured the two, usually drunk, men would be. His gaze fixed. The pitch came quickly with an obvious trajectory. George leaned in and whacked the shit out of it.

Henry was occupied slamming the Pabst and Willey was trying to tie his shoe when the ball decimated the glass patio table into as many pieces as there are stars in the sky, thwacked off the hard tile under the metal skeleton of the table, and if guided by divine intervention, cram-tinkle-smacked into the outside face of a thick glass tile of Henry's kitchen window. It rested from its sudden violence in the shattered tooth of tile as if carefully placed there with Martha Stewart's white gloves.

Stunned, Willey and Henry began to laugh, the type that dries and strips the throat. Likewise, Ramirez's teammates, the FIB Global Mayhem Machine, cheered. Giddy, Henry and Willey loaded up the customized bed pan, pulled

the surgical tubing to its capacity, and ripped Ramirez's hot rock along with the ball from that afternoon's practice back at the field. They hadn't mastered the mortaring technique as well as anticipated. The balls landed between the second baseman and center fielder in a slow arc.

The crowd of little leaguers and parents looked in disbelief. What they saw was confusing, a tad disturbing.



Across the field from them, two men, clad in neon motocross gear and hard hats, stood under a wobbling, levitated bed pan catapult, yelling WOO HOO, WOO HOO, over and over again. The center fielder became the most nervous. He was the closest to the obnoxious men and immediately became bummed the he had fought with the coach, no longer wanting to play right field. Not enough action, he had told him.

Darkness gathered, blackened the outlines of silhouettes, and closed in. The trees that partially lined the sides of Henry and Willey's house, gap-toothed at the rear, lost all definition.

Henry hooked his thumbs in the almost worn out belt loops of his pants. "Not a bad first sortie, my friend."

Willey beamed. His eyes were little fog lights illuminating small patches of night.

Henry felt alive, almost temporarily forgetting what his mind had been dwelling on like tartar scraped from a regularly



brushed tooth: Stephanie. The second Stephanie in a row. At least her name had been easy to remember.

"I think this bad boy's got the range to make it over the batting cage," Willey said as he caressed the bed pan. His reflection engorged and receded in the high-polished surfaces of the fecal receptor. "I feel like an office golf ball putt return machine. Giving balls back to their rightful owner." Willey glowed as if he'd swallowed a small star instead of the worm along with his tequila.

Surveying the broken remains of day where the glass patio table had stood, Henry grinned again. He hadn't liked the table. He often thought of painting a big picture of his wife on it but he lacked the talent. Drawn with a china marker, his portrait looked more like a constipated woodchuck than his wife, so he'd given up, and, in the end, fate had beaten him to its destruction.

"This place reminds me of my parents' house when they retired," Henry said as he looked at Willey's feet. They still had thick-soled work boots on. "I'll sweep in the morning." Gears shifted. "My parents lived on a golf course and they had one of the first privately owned Camcorders that used Beta tapes. Not a Super 8. Big as a howitzer. Dad even bought a back brace so he could haul the thing around without slipping a disk.

"They'd collect the golf balls that strayed into their yard. He was a retired general construction contractor and got his hand on a nail gun. I think its official title was the 'Hellspawn 2000,' but Dad had glued on a Cadillac emblem on the side of it. Whenever he said he was 'gonna drive the

Caddie,' we knew what he meant. You would hear the anemic thwock of ten inch, barb-tipped nails shooting through two or three strategically placed golf balls and into the thick peat of the rough part of the fairway. It was a common occurrence to see the orange extension chord wind through the grass like an unfed snake past the limits of the porch light out into the darkness. During the day, usually in the morning, when the first couple of rounds of golfers would whine by in their carts, he'd videotape the unlucky bastard who would swing at the impaled ball. Dad hated golf, the players even more: 'Golf,' he said so many times it could have been tattooed on his forehead, 'is for pussies. One day, I'm going to the clubhouse and am going to punch every one of them in the mouth.' Never did. Made intricate blueprints for its execution, though."

"Any good footage?" Willey asked. "Any geezer in spats dislocating an elbow?"

"Better." Henry smiled evilly. "One morning there was a crazy noise. A ball, apparently, had zinged off the air-conditioning unit, off the inside of the back wall, and went through my parent's bedroom window. Mom grabbed the camera, Dad bolted out the back door."

"Yeah?" Willey had the pro's ear for ball penetration stories. It took time for him to be impressed.

"Well since it was past nine, Dad had his whiskey sours in him," Henry continued. "The shooter, a guy followed by two golf carts of mirror-glassed, ear-pieced body guards, began scanning the rough near the house. Dad started yelling stuff that can't be misinterpreted: 'slipcockfuckstick,' you know the genre. The guy he yelled at was too calm. He fessed



that his ball might have hit our house but didn't own up to the damage because he didn't hear the glass break from his tee off. His goons all nodded. Calmly, the guy said his name, which Dad forgot. What he did remember was that the guy was a Republican senator from Wisconsin, which left Dad unimpressed. 'Cheeseeatincowfucker,' Dad yelled as he did his best to keep Senator's mind off the ball: one of Dad's specially spiked Top Flites. When Senator's arm connected with the ball, he crumpled; a puppet with all its strings cut. Dad never did like politics and Senator never did get a conviction. Seems that Senator broached the golfers' code. He swore he hit his own ball, when his ball was really on my Dad's pillow. The ball he claimed as his own had a ten-inch spike in it. Rather than have his golfing ethics looked into and pay for a new A/C and window, Senator reported that he had pulled a muscle. I guess he valued his club membership more than his clavicle." Henry smiled. His teeth shone like Chiclets even though it was dark.



The baseball game continued. The score wasn't important. Some children became more precious to their parents, some less, and some floated on the fudge factor of athletic mediocrity and parental kindness. This happened in small degrees, a microdot in a full page ad of a child's adolescence.

Henry and Willey drank more, hitting the buzz plateau full force. The idea of invading Canada became a topic of heated debate.

"Besides giving us 'Strange Brew' and John Candy, what was the reason for not having them pay for musical pain inflicted by Rush, Loverboy, and Bryan Adams?" Willey pleaded. Time wore on, fully dressed in night.

Bottom of the ninth. Close to both the end of the game and vigilante ball returns.

Two out. Ramirez up. He had struck out the three times and hadn't gotten the ball out of the infield since his first attempt. Henry and Willey felt obligated to make sure this fact hadn't slipped by him.

"Want to moon him," Willey asked.

"Sure. The lights are low. I don't think we could get charged with indecent exposure," Henry slurred.

With much deliberation, they climbed up the block wall via the pool ladder placed there for that specific purpose.

"YYYYOOOODDDDEEELLLLAAAAAAAYYYY YHHEEEEEHHHOOOOO." They jumped and screamed, watching their language, since they were in the lower intestines, near the dead-center guts, of the suburbs. "HEY BATTAABATTABATTA."

Ramirez swung, connected.

Willey didn't even have the time to flinch. The ball connected with the upper crack of his ass at the approximate time he heard the crack of the bat. A line-drive shot that hadn't lost much of its pickle.



Willey let out a surprised half howl/ half laugh. The welt raised and reddened as he fell. By the time he hit concrete, the base of his spine felt the size and shape of an Elmer Fudd contusion, the type Bugs could inflict with a pocket-sized anvil.

The ball, in its odd, new trajectory, looped back into the air towards the house.

Ramirez ran the bases, double proud that his aim was true when it counted most. All the basemen and the shortstop of the other team, the Carpeteria Yuccas, gave him high fives as he rounded the bases. The parents and friends in the stand cheered a loose chorus of Anchor Steam, latte, and Evian whoops.

The ball, almost if by remote control, arced in slow motion as Henry spun around. It sparkled like a spy satellite as it plowed through the living room window. Glass cascaded in a brittle waterfall.

"Doh," Henry said. "You all right Willey?"

Willey lay on his side, cupping his butt. "I think he nicked my nuts. I had 'em out for added affect." Henry didn't want to stress details, but the impact mark was too high, besides, his friend was in pain -- the type of pain akin to nut sack trauma -- pain that had to be waited out and not touched. "Want your margarita?"

Willey nodded. He felt instantly sober and didn't like it one bit.

Henry walked through the sliding glass door in search of a refresher. He began to philosophize uncontrollably. Everytime you hear the crack of the bat, he mused, you wonder

if you're going to get nailed. Watering petunias shouldn't have so much stress attached to it. Is it better to live in constant prevention or should you grab the bat-wielding monstrosities by the gullet and yell "Jerkoff, not this time fella. This house is no longer your home run." House damage is the reason they cheer. I'm paying for their athletic incentive. Bet the coach gives any kid who whacks my house a Fudgecicle. Am I going to get a comp check when they make it to the majors? Silly thoughts. As he turned on the light, the esoteric evaporated. A berserk animal leapt under Henry's skin when he saw his trophy, the centerpiece of the living room decor, shattered.

He swooped down and held the parts with caution fit for a baby with a snapped spine. Part of the theatrics were provided by Pabst but the base feelings were real. He walked outside, head dangling, surveying the mess of something once whole.



"The trophy's dead," Henry said. "It wasn't much but it was the only one I had."

"Bastards, all of 'em," Willey said. "You bring my marg?"



Henry carefully put all the pieces into one pile and turned around. "One second."

He returned. "How's the sack?"

"Better," Willey answered, almost able to open his eyes fully. "What are we going to do, Chief?" His voice leaked traces of revenge.

Henry peered over the wall. Patches of trash were left behind on the trimmed beard of grass, obvious as bits of food on facial hair. The garbage cans were over full, throwing up wrappers and wax cups. The scenery was silent and the lights shone down on an almost-still life. Some bugs attracted to the stadium lights died.



Henry continued his quick survey then bent down to Willey. "Game's over but the dumbfuck umpire left the bases. Let's go steal them." Henry became instantly silent as his eyes were caught again

by the awkward remains of his still golden but snapped symbol of achievement. "I'll get the pry bar."

"Turbo, can we wait a second? I feel a bit too sober." Willey said.

"Sure." Henry nodded. "We've got to be smart. Misdemeanor larceny carries up to six months in jail or a thousand dollar fine or both. Especially when the city's youth are directly affected."

Henry picked his binoculars off the lawn chair and climbed back onto the wall. "One of the advantages of your

father being a voyeur and a talkative drunk," he said absently to Willey, who was filling the gaps in his courage one shot at a time. Henry stole long glances over to his rock salt-shooting neighbor Murphy through his open kitchen window, watching him get a carton of frozen yogurt from the icebox. The baseball barrage on his house was getting to the old man. He had taken it personally. His blood pressure had become dangerously high. Henry paused, letting the binoculars down. "You're going to have to look like a chick," he told Willey.

It took a couple seconds for the sentence to make some sense, but even when it did, Willey agreed, knowing that Henry's instincts were rarely wrong.

"I'm not shaving my legs or pubes though," Willey said. And they both agreed.

Inside, Henry stripped off the protective gear, shoved a small throw pillow under a light blue polo shirt for an instant beer gut. He then matched all the big details of Murphy's evening wear: braided sandals, black socks, pastelly Bermuda shorts, figuring the darkness would smooth over most of the smaller differences. He reminded himself to limp. Willey put on a red dress that a long ex'd girlfriend had left over a year ago that was in the back of his sock drawer. The dress had been loose on her but was tight on his hips. A mumu it wasn't, but it was close enough for tequila eyes and half light.

As they walked outside, the baseball diamond snapped to darkness. All the lights of Vegas reflected off the bellies of low-lying clouds. The sky looked like a ripped-open bag of strawberry Skittles.



The men went to the business of uprooting the bases, wasting little time.

Willey, for the second time that night, felt alive. "Man," he whispered, "this rules. We rule the planet. Better than a beer commercial, better than a museum where you go see something twisty or paint, dropped on a canvas. This I can understand without Cliff's Notes." He giggled and found it hard to stop.

The men struggled with home base. It seemed to have extra anchorage and was deep set. Willey held the three bases under his arms and Henry pried up the white rubber pentagon.

From the corner of their eyes, both men saw the glint of polished fender -- distant but closing in was a police car prowling with its head lights off.

They also saw the red penetrations of another cop, on his bike, rear light reflecting off a wall. He'd turned off his cop bike headlight but left the back on, not wanting to get rear ended or run over.

"Let's diddy Lolla," Henry said as he ran with a limp, acting out Murphy's style of flight. Apparently, neither officer had celled in a pursuit to dispatch. The bike cop rounded the corner, hit a patch of sand, and tumbled over the quickly accelerating, unlit cop car. Legs were broken along with professional courtesy. Backup was called.

Henry and Willey ran the inspired run of being chased, although intentionally trying to look awkward. Feeling they had the room, they faked a struggle up Murphy's back fence. "Where are Henderson's finest?" Willey asked as he followed

Henry's cue and deposited the bases under the well-groomed cypress trees.

"Complaining?" Henry asked as he vaulted over the wall into the sanctuary of his own back yard. "Hope the disguises worked."

Henry knew in the back of his mind that old man Murphy would go to the door angry, fists clenched, maybe with frozen yogurt staining the front of his shirt. They'd already nabbed Murphy twice that year. Once for running over the foul ball fence with his two-tone '48 Buick. The insulating foam he'd twined to the hood didn't stop the chain links from destroying his paint job and parts of the fence were still stuck in the car's undercarriage when he parked it in his car port. The other incident made him dangerous. He blasted a kid with rock salt. Only grazed him the night before but trauma is hard to erase from a ten-year-old's mind, especially when both of his parents were trial attorneys.

Henry and Willey scooted inside, careful not to giggle,



and conscientiously folded all of their costumes into the backs of drawers, under other clothes, and redressed.

It's all the trick of knowing when to push and when to let go, Henry thought.

Sirens approached, sounding angry, like wasps in a recently poked nest.



More cops arrived, practicing, as if real crime had transpired. The dispatch was grave on the surface: disgruntled, elderly man, with reputed patriot leanings, previous record, armed and dangerous, one officer down, backup requested.

Henry and Willey slipped into the easy camouflage of two drunk guys on an old, sagging couch watching a movie on a Friday night.

The cops knocked on Murphy's door. He answered it, the sleeves of his powder blue polo shirt rolled up. The cops mistook Murphy's sweat for the perspiration of pursuit but it was really due to the malfunctioning A/C, result of a recent ball encounter. The old man's eyes were red with rage as they handcuffed him and read him his Miranda rights.

"Six of you?" Murphy screamed. "You too much of a wussy to take one old man downtown? Gotta call the whole precinct? Someone's probably robbing 7-11 blind right now."

The cops found the Misses with her feet propped up inside the refrigerator in the garage. She didn't say a word except that she'd like to have her shoes and a gold lame blouse. Her wardrobe was important to her, no matter the occasion. She seemed to welcome the company.

The cops scrambled like termites on a fresh slab of pine, burrowing through drawers, excavating nooks and crannies. What they found was probable cause. The final recreational projectile tally was as follows: 246 balls in all, mostly baseballs; 14 whiffle balls, 25 tennis balls, a cricket ball, 8 racquet balls, 4 basketballs, 2 footballs, an Aerobie, and a hybrid John Elway-endorsed Nerf thingy that had been taken off the market due to breaking many a consumer's finger.

"The kites are mine bucko," Murphy responded to a young cop's inquiry. "Leave 'em where you found 'em."

Another cop was busy searching through Murphy's well-kept and superbly cross indexed files outlining his battle with the city and the county about moving the ball park to another location and the city's cost analysis of why building a 35-foot tall net to protect the houses on the perimeter was too exorbitant a burden on the rest of the community.

"Now, Mr. Murphy," the lead cop said, "that's not very nice." He let a paper slide from his hand. It floated to the table and even though it landed upside down, Murphy let out a groan. He knew that his red ink side-running commentary on the official responses would some day get him in trouble. The words "rat bastards" bled through to the back of the page.

"Don't forget to take the petition," Murphy said as the cop snapped the small lever on the filing cabinet shut.

The petition for the park's transformation into an urban jogging trail had been signed by everyone in the neighborhood except Rzpicha.

"Mr. Murphy, I'm going to get the marrow of the stew," the top cop said. His haircut was high and tight. "We've been watching you for about a year. You can't keep on sabotaging the field. One more strike, and you're doing hard time."

At this, Murphy broke. His body shriveled into itself, defeated.

Another officer, one who Murphy hadn't remembered from the crowd at his front door, walked into the living room. "Found the filched bases captain."



Mrs. Murphy's torment broke the silence. "We're going bananas out here, you get me?" Her face turned the same color of his wife's mumu. "The pool plooping full of balls, ceramic roof tiles tinkling down, windows smashed out, even the A/C's on the blink for the third time this summer. It's like the sky is falling down into a funnel over our house. Missiles everywhere. Shots pepper our patio covers. God will it stop? What will it take, someone dying of a head injury?"

The cops looked at one another. Murphy looked at Lolla. Lolla looked at her feet.

"I took the bases," Murphy said to a question not yet asked. "I took them myself."

Another cop was careful with Murphy's head as he tucked him into the back seat of one of the four squad cars parked at the end of deep ruts on the front lawn. Lights shone off the collected faces of pajamaed neighbors who cheered. They liked Murphy. Murphy liked the feeling of standing up for his convictions. The young cop was glad that Murphy didn't have a gun like the dispatch had warned.



Henry and Willey continued drinking, wind from the broken window tussled their hair. Slow but long flashes of light bounced off of their eyes. They were watching a golfing video and the quality was poor.

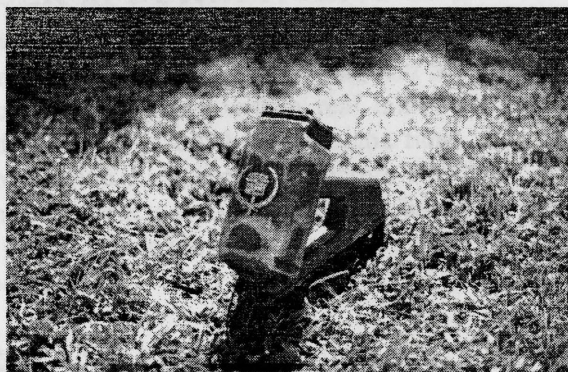
"Oh, yeah... right on... it is on this tape," Henry said.

Willey straightened up and opened his eyes.

On the TV, in slow motion, a distinguished and tanned statesman took a healthy swing at a small, white ball. The man crumpled on impact. The ball did not move.

"Wanna see that again?" Henry asked.

"You bet," Willey answered. They watched, riveted, as Senator struck at the same ball, falling, over and over and over again.







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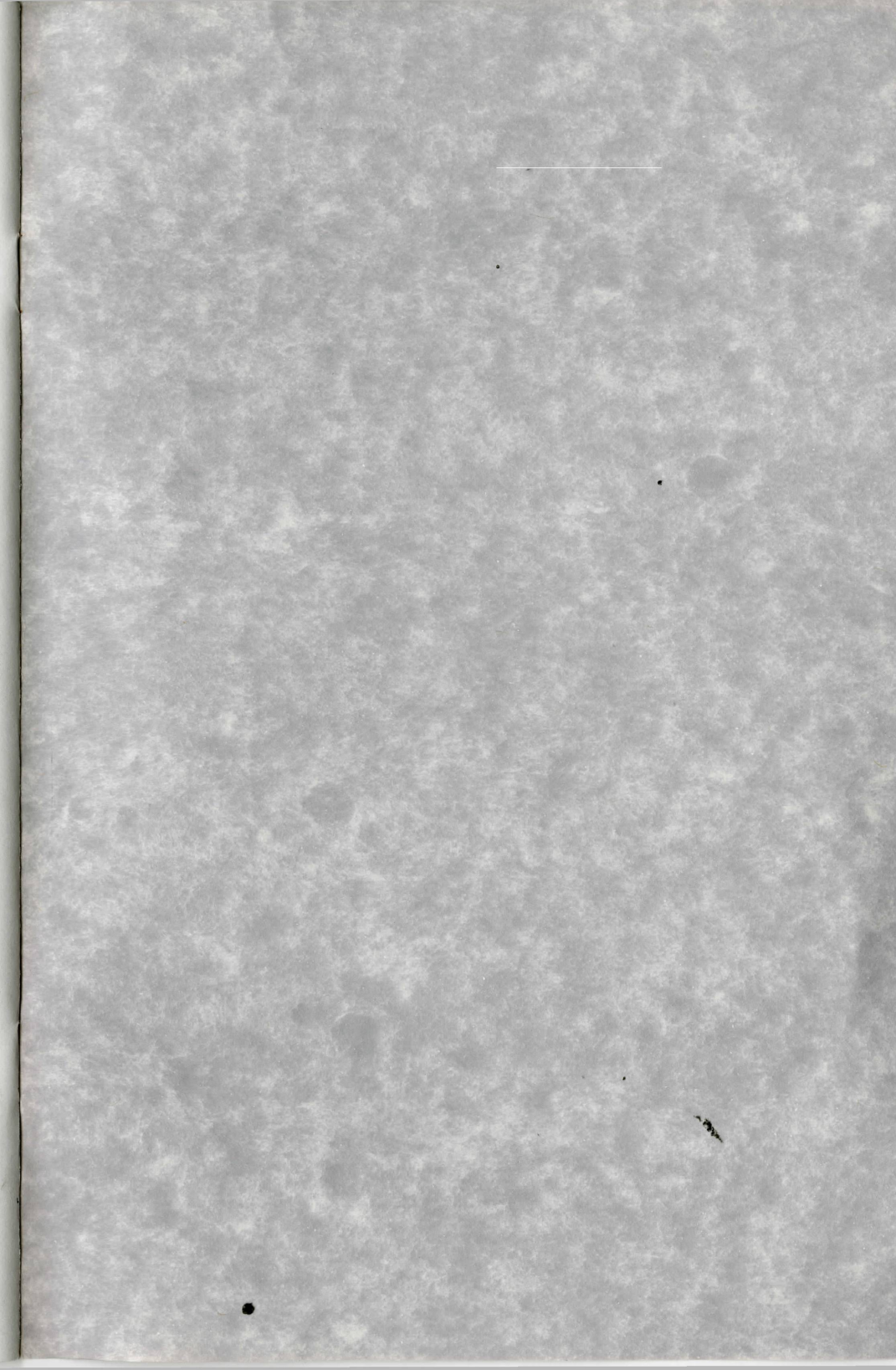
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