

SHIT

ROBIN YOURGRAVE

TWO DOLLARS

ISSUE ONE

BIRD

For sake of saving my ass, the story titles are not my own words; they are song titles that are in some way related to the story being told. All of the photos are taken by me, and all images used are either my own or they were given to me by an important player in last year's game.

All of the names are real or nicknames that I commonly associate with the individual. Everything is true, no bullshit. I'm not out to make myself look like a good person, a bad person, somewhere in between... that's not my goal. All I can hope for is that someone can take something from this and possibly keep from doing the same stupid shit that I did.

- Robin Yeargrave

Preface

He's at work, I'm sofa bound. Sitting in an over stuffy room listening to shitty sit coms and going back and forth between accepting and vomiting words. I've downed two and a half pots of coffee thus far, probably smoked my weight in cigarettes, and I actually showered. A productive day I'd say.

I read Women by Bukowski for the second time tonight, searching for something to say and how to say it. Three pages into my second literary conquest of the night and a text from Dean left me here, though, progressing toward filling these blank pages.

"If I'm bad now, I used to be much worse. There was a huge magazine to finish, and only one thing would give me the extra inspiration and energy to complete it in time. Love. I actually calculated it out like that, in cold blood, then found Larenka on the avenue."

- Aaron Cometbus "Lanky"

You know, I've always loved coffee. Draining pot after pot by myself. I have always enjoyed murdering my lungs one coffin nail at a time. I love beer, drinking it alone even. Now, though, all of those things seem so fucking boring when I'm indulging alone. The solitude I used to be so content in now feels empty. I guess in the end, when looking back in retrospect, that's what solitude is supposed to feel like. People become content in their loneliness before realizing that it was loneliness all along. Looking back, that's all it was.

Loneliness. Not contentment, not being happy with myself, not enjoying my own company. I'd been feeling my way around all along, searching for a mirror, someone else to look back at

as a reflection of myself. And now that I have that, I can see and identify all of the things I was unable to before.

I like to live at the speed of light. I like being lazy and drunk and smelly and vulgar and exhausted. I like not knowing where I'm going to end up or how I'm going to get there. I like not sleeping for days on end while working too much and being up all odd hours of the night writing. And to find someone with the same principles? Fuck. I never thought I'd see the day.

We've created our own plane. We've created our own rules and standards for leading a happy life. We know what we want. And nobody can touch that or taint it in any way. Why? Because they don't understand it and they are blinded by their own laws and regulations. Their happiness is merited by material. Ours is not.

We lay waste to our bodies and the bottles and ashtrays that surround us. Physical health is not as important as happiness and we are the people who see that. Are we going to die young? Fuck yes we are. But are we going to be laughing and living the entire road to the early grave? Fuck. Yes. We. Are.

And you know what's funny? Both of us are guilty of falling victim to the material, sex-driven lifestyle. But we were smart enough to realize that wasn't what we wanted out of life. We did what we had to change it. Nothing sounds better than a bitter night, loud music, and an open road. As long as I'm with you, I'm warm.

Conceptual paths

High school held for me a time where I found everything but what I was looking for. I dated very little, I was ridden with 'always the friend, never the girlfriend' syndrome. I was alright with it sometimes but others I would look around, longing for what the people around me had and I didn't. Hell, I was a fag hag and my regular gaggle of gays was getting more romance than me. That's a lot to be said when growing up in a largely republican, rich, upper class, downright shitty, closed minded high school.

Parading through the halls I stuck out like a Jew star emblazoned on a wool coat. I wore t-shirts instead of blouses, jeans instead of skirts, and my hair was black (naturally, mind you) instead of bleached. I worked for the student body newspaper and participated in plays occasionally but all in all I was pretty uninvolved with cliché high school matters. I loathed athleticism and school spirit, I hated choking down my cigarettes every morning before school only to endure eight full hours of nicotine depravation, and I hated the majority of my teachers that mistook my attitudes and outlooks for academic delinquency. This was simply not the case.

I cared about my education, a lot at that. I longed to be a writer and I know, as far as journalism goes anyway, that the field is incredibly competitive and you have to be among the best to get anywhere. This is why I cared.

My educators felt I had different sentiments though. Just because I hated my school didn't mean that I didn't want to learn or that I didn't value an education. I just loathed the

establishment of high school. I was above it and ready for bigger things.

I found pieces of bigger things by looking to older crowds. People that had already moved past the bullshit, people already on the threshold of tasting life. These were people that knew the garbage surrounding high school only lasted for four years and once it's done it's done.

Some of these people came and went, some lent their inspiration and just as fast as they inspired they vanished. Some I had feelings for that never came to fruition and some had friends, removed from myself, that held impact that never happened at the time. It's ones that re-appear, years later, that you never expect to see again, hadn't even thought about in years that end up impacting you in ways that didn't seem possible. These people are reality.

As You Were

In January Josh and I had split. We'd been together two and a half years, my longest relationship thus far. We were living together and shortly after the decision to move in, my mind had

entirely changed about our relationship. I used to be okay with him as a person, able to look past his flaws and embrace the person he was, but that's where I was wrong. When someone is flawed, incorrect, imperfect, you're supposed to be able to accept the flaws, not simply look past them. And I realized this that January.

It didn't help that I'd thought I was in love with someone else, emotionally cheating on Josh. So unfair. It was the right thing to do, leaving him. I remember it was snowing, disgusting cold dandruff sifting through the air. I'd been talking about living apart and staying together for a while and told him a few nights prior the plan I was going to follow through with. My ulterior motives were to move out, wait a while, then split to soften the blow. There was something about this night that just made me want to draw it to a close.

He'd lied to me a few weeks prior about paying the electric bill, only to find us showing up at home after a stressful day of work to no power in our apartment. A few days before this night in particular we were sitting, watching television as usual, and out of nowhere he proceeds to tell me that we had thirty days to move out of the apartment. He said he broke the lease, to this day I still think we were evicted but he was too embarrassed to tell me that he wasn't managing the rent money. This, for me, was the last mile.

We were broke. He sucked with money. I sucked at dealing with my feelings. I was done. We were watching TV in the living room that night, on separate couches. Our apartment smelled like cat piss and rotten food. The bathrooms hadn't been cleaned in months, booze stains and scratches all along the walls. I took in my disgusting surroundings for the first time since I had moved in. This was what misery felt like. Living in a shit hole with a man I no longer loved in a part of town that I loathed. Fuck Aboite, fuck Aston Pointe, fuck this apartment, and fuck this dead end relationship. Done and done.

It was brewing in me for a while, fermenting and ready to serve. During a commercial break, myself in my typical evening daze, I caught movement out of my peripherals and glanced to witness the motion. It was him, Josh, looking at me for the first time since I'd moved in with the focus and emotion of a newly budding relationship.

"So, I have to ask," he said, "what exactly are you looking to get out of this whole living apart thing?"

I stalled, my heart beginning to shatter glass, attempting to muster the correct words through sweaty palms and a swollen heart. I made eye contact, at last.

"I think I'm ready to break up."

The eye contact was gone. The television was blaring but I fucking swear you'd be able to hear a flea fart if you tried hard enough. Those seven words; simple, concise, clear... had shattered the world that he held so near and dear. Soon followed begs and pleads on his part about how he wanted to live through the journeys I wanted to embark on and how he was willing to change and how he would always love me and blah de fucking blah. I didn't want to hear it. I was finished months ago. We didn't have a house phone and he didn't have a cell phone, so he had to call a few of his friends with my minutes to divulge his bad news. The last financial burden he would cause me.

Coby and Ryan, a couple of long time buddies of mine knew the inevitable was near and had already cleared out a room for me at their place. I gathered a few necessities that would get me through the week and headed out the door.

The roads were bad, coated with snow; still falling. I drove over to Coby's place and they were still up, waiting for me to show. Ryan handed me a beer, commended me with a pat on the back, left me in the garage and allowed me to deal. I talked to Tippy, my best friend who had moved to Purdue, first and told her about the whole thing. She needed to know. The first person I called after, though, was Sean, the guy in Colorado that I had been longing for, emotionally cheating on Josh with. See, he wasn't the reason I'd broken up with Josh but he played a huge fucking part in it. He made me realize that many of the things I was looking for would and could never be found in Josh. I accepted that.

Sean pushed me to realize what I had been thinking and feeling for so long and all of the ways in which I had avoided addressing it. The only thing that I, personally, misconstrued was my feelings for Sean. Yeah, he brought on one of the single most important things I had up until this point ever had to do, but I had life confused with love. But, I'll get to that later.

I went a few days without talking to Josh, letting everything settle. It really blows having to hurt someone so badly and a lot of people didn't understand that I was hurting too. I'd spent two and a half years of my life with Josh, for being twenty years old that is a long fucking time. It felt like I was ending a legacy. The majority of our mutual friends had obviously taken sides. The day following the break up entailed several nasty texts from 'friends' and my days were spent defending my own honor in this complete mess of a situation. It hurt me too. As much as a relief as it was, finally leaving him, I'd be a liar if I were to say that none of my tears were shed over the situation. But, alas, what was done was just that. Done. No turning back, no looking back, finished.

The tidal waves from the break up waned. Slowly I was able to make occasional appearances at the old apartment to gather up my shit as I needed it. I was getting along just fine living with Coby and Ryan. Any time we were home together we spent the hours drinking in the garage, gallons of vodka laid to waste before us, empty cans of Pabst strewn about the place on any given night. I was fine with it, my liquored persona thirsted for nothing more. I didn't realize it then, but the deepest, darkest pits of sensibility were thrown away and I employed nothing more than attitudes of a lost fucking lush. I continued talking to Sean on a regular basis, wondering when this new sense of passion would come to fruition. One night in late January he told me that his rents were leaving town for a few days and I would be able to fly out in February to rekindle what was so lost before. Thrilled waves of relief enveloped my consciousness and I considered myself one step closer to 'contentment.'

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I lived on the next few weeks, drinking and smoking my way quickly into stupidity. I wasn't completely neglecting my collegiate studies but I was half assing them for sure. I, the upstanding studious Robin, no longer had qualms with skipping classes, not studying, or just flat out ignoring. All I could think about was getting home to the bottles and pipes, my fellow lonely companions. I was broke, the only reason I afforded even a month's rent was because of my tax return. I was more concerned with shoveling out my dollars for future Colorado visits and wasted evenings covered in glitter.

Late February came and I was riddled with excitement, anticipation. I paid Ryan twenty five bucks to lug my ass down to Indianapolis International, a morning flight. I waited for what seemed like days for the plane to board and once it finally did, my heart was in the seat before I was. Too bad my brain didn't choose to follow. My plane landed three hours later, Denver, Colorado. I was there, finally, after several long years of waiting. I gathered my shit from the overhead compartment and made my way through the terminal to find him there, waiting for me. We found each other, embraced, thrilled as all hell to see each other. We only had four days together so we bode our time well.

We went back to his house, ordered pizza, fucked, ate, fucked, watched movies, slept, fucked, drank, ran from an apartment landlord, fucked, slept, fucked, ate, went to a bar, fucked, slept, ate, made out, slept, then I left. For some reason after this trip, I was convinced that he and I had something real.

The day he took me to the airport for my flight home I was devastated. How the fuck was I to know that he and I were going to 'fall for each other' so hard?

He called before I boarded my plane and we decided through faces drenched with tears that we were going to give this long distance thing a go. It was natural to feel this way, picking apart the situation now with sobered thoughts. When lust is a driving force behind anything, misconstrued feelings are bound to happen. To someone who has never experienced love before, lust and love can get dangerously intertwined, so much so that entire waves of logic can be turned to glass, shattered, and turned back to sand.

The next few weeks went by and Sean was flying out at the end of March to come meet my family. Somehow after spending four days with him made me decide to move to Denver. I thought I was in love with him, yes, but Denver was actually a city where I had no problem picturing myself. It was metropolitan enough for me to eventually be able to kick off a career yet it lacked the absurd cost of living expenses that many other cities did. I thought I had found the perfect fit.

So, completely irrational decision to move in motion, Sean was pretty much required to come meet my family, Tippy, and the rest of the people close to me. He came, left, and everything was still fine. The next month passed, I flew out again sometime in mid April and things seemed a little off. It just wasn't the same. The trip ended, I was slowly but surely getting everything lined up to move and as soon as the semester ended, I had tickets to fly out for eight days. I was stoked. Over that eight day vacation, I was going to a fuck ton of shows to see bands and musicians that I loved, was going to drink off the better part of the semester, and have a grand 'ol time.

No sooner than about two weeks before I was going to come spend over a week with Sean, he decides to break up with me, with claims of my youth being more important than being in a relationship and, I quote, "you need to go out, party, get laid, and enjoy being young."... apparently being twenty three grants you with superiority and experience far beyond the twenty year old realm of understanding.

I was upset, irrational, and literally did not know what to do with myself. A few days before I was supposed to fly out, I went to a birthday party for a friend of mine, honestly with no other intent than getting shitfaced and ringing out my emotional distress. A guy was there that I had met a few times before and we chatted it up a little, nothing too deep really. Just simply scratching the material surface of any superficial meet and greet. So naturally, flirting with disaster, physical contact slowly ensued. Deeper into the night, I get a phone call from Sean. It was his graduation day (from college, no less) and he still marked me as an important person in his life. At the time he called, though, I was far from conversational. Mr. Conquest was swinging from my limbs and the possibility of getting laid was all I could focus on.

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The conversation, though, audibly blurry, went as follows:

Sean: So yeah, graduation went well.

Me: Hey, ya know, I'm at this party, there's a fuck ton of people here, I need to go.

Sean: Well...okay.

Me: Yeah, sorry, I just need to get off the phone.

Sean: Are you trying to get laid or something?

Me: Yes, actually, and I need to get off the phone.

Sean: Oh, uh, well... okay. Have fun, be safe.

Me: Okay, bye.

So I went, did my thing, and the next morning I felt everything but used. I guess in a way it was a sense of triumph that I had never experienced before. I wasn't ashamed, I didn't question anything, I was totally and completely fine with the events that ensued. Little did I know the shit storm that was about to follow.

The guy dropped me off back at my car and I met up with my friend Andy for coffee and company. I'm pretty sure we got breakfast, but that whole day is still pretty blurry. I do remember, though, that the evening to follow changed the course of my history forever.

He didn't have the gnads to call, neither did I. It wasn't my plan to tell him that I was on the brink of a one night stand, it wasn't my plan to fuck someone else on his graduation day, and it wasn't my plan to break up a week before I was supposed to spend eight days with the motherfucker. But, alas, "life is what happens while you are busy making other plans."

— John Lennon

So he texts me.

Sean: So did you get laid last night?

Me: Yes, yes I did.

Sean: Was he better than me?

Me: No, but it was great.

Sean: If I knew you were the kind of girl who was just going to give it up on a dime then I would have never invested so much time and emotion into you.

My initial thoughts seemed, at the time, irrational... but even looking back it still makes perfect sense, his flaws in logic. I was prepared to uproot the entire life that I had built to move to Colorado, not only to be with him but also to create a new life for myself. To start fresh. To finally, hopefully, be able to make something of myself.

A few more days went by and we finally had the courage to face the music over the telephone. To this day they were some of the most heated phone conversations I think I've ever had. We argued the majority of the week and then to my great surprise, he apologized and admitted that if presented the same opportunity, he would have jumped on it (no pun intended).

We set the problems aside and my long ass trip there was in direct sight. I was prepping myself, trying to hold out my hard-ass exterior as to not make a nervous wreck of myself. We talked almost every day still, and then it was time.

My mom took me to the airport that day, unbeknownst to me at the time, but the last time I would traverse the drive for a take-off flight to Denver, Colorado.

No matter how much I mentally prepared myself for the ways I may be feeling this day, I was nervous, my shakes wouldn't go away, I was paler than I'd noticed in months. But, I was at the airport and there was no turning back.

I arrived in Denver at around five and he was an hour late picking me up. I got into his car and shallow, uninterested conversation ensued about music, the last few weeks, and more casual bullshit small talk that happens in awkward situations. It was Memorial Day weekend and a friend of his was having a party. Once the beer started flowing a little bit, the nervous interaction slowly drifted away and things loosened up, at least a little bit.

The party dulled out so we went back to his house. Up to his room, onto his bed, we flipped on South Park and not a word was said. I put my head on the pillow; he leaned over and kissed me.

"We need to talk," I said. So we did. He explained again the reasons for his desire to split; I explained my reasons

for sleeping around. Everything was covered and I was set to have an amazing trip.

The next few days were filled with beer, music, laughter, and fun. Yeah, we messed around. Yeah, we probably shouldn't have. I was still slightly scattered and let's just face it... the lust hadn't dissipated.

I guess the real eye opener during the whole trip was Thursday, May 28th. He and I went to Red Rocks amphitheater to see Alkaline Trio. We were front row, right in front of Skiba. It was fucking amazing. Both of our favorite bands, at easily one of the most beautiful places that I have ever had the pleasure of setting foot in. Trio sounded great, I was on cloud nine. I met Skiba that day (a moment I never thought would come) and I couldn't have asked for better weather. It was a perfect day... until the show was over.

He made a phone call to an anonymous recipient as we were walking back to his car. I knew it was another girl. This really solidified the fact that Sean, tactless and oblivious to my lack of ignorance, and I were over. Done. Finished. But, for whatever reason, I was still hell bent on moving to Colorado.

Here I was, broken hearted still and profusely bleeding on the inside, but I was willing to live with this kid, to surrender everything I worked so hard to build in Fort Wayne.

After Thursday I had four more days left. I had to make the best of it. We got drunk at Illegal Pete's then went back to his place. We pulled into the driveway as "Nose Over Tail" was playing and he had, at the time, given me the most passionate kiss I had ever received. Through beer goggles and misconstrued emotion, we went upstairs and fucked for the last time.

After the act, we were laying there in bed watching TV and his cell phone went off. I looked over his shoulder to see who it was. out of curiosity, and it was her. So there he was, heartbroken girl in his arms, texting another conquest. The reminder of the trip was empty.

So that was that. I flew back to Indiana that Monday, still for whatever reason intent on moving; but not for long.

Slowly the phone calls declined in frequency, we no longer really had anything to talk about. A time drew near when the only time he ever wanted to call me was asking for sex advice for the new chick he was banging. It was time for me to ignore his phone calls.

I was staying, content in calling Fort Wayne my home for however much longer it took. Disappointed? Fuck yeah, I was. But, it wasn't worth the sacrifice. Looking back on it, if I were to have moved there... I would probably be homeless.

Done with Sean and the idea of love and romance in general, I progressed with my summer of drunken debauchery. There were parties, boys, and beer. Everything and more that made me happy and satisfied at the time. Almost every moment not spent working was spent drinking, and I wish this was an exaggeration.

I divulged my conquests. I unexpectedly formed friendships, close ones at that, with Winner and Amber. Though our common interests weren't precisely aligned, we were all the same and different enough to form an unadulterated bond that would furnish a guiding light for me in those months. They didn't approve of my decisions but, after each weekend update, they sure as shit found humor in it. To a certain extent, anyway.

I'd been hanging out with Wayne quite a bit over the summer. We both shared a love for the majority of the same music and shit, we both loved to drink. Late July rolled around and Wayne invited me to a friend of his' going away party.

Coolers full of PBR, a keg of Shock Top, and enough great music to fuel a long, drunken, summer evening.

I, yet again, set in stone my themes for the summer. Sex, booze, and music. That's it. No romance, no love. I was busy 'finding' myself and learning how to be alone.

After the party, getting dropped off back at my car left me exactly how I was. The alcohol had worn off, my toenails had fallen off (to this day I still have no idea how the hell that happened), and my self-respect was still somehow in tact. This party left me fine with everything that had happened earlier in the year, but little did I know, this party, this one, summer drunken excursion, was the one that would change my life forever.

Are You There Margaret? It's Me, God.

It was mid August and I had all but reflected on the last few months. Finally came clean and cancelled my registration at the Metropolitan State College of Denver and signed up for classes at IPFW. I registered really fucking late so naturally I was in for a pretty dull semester. Oh, the price to pay for pipe dreams.

Although I still wasn't completely okay with the idea of staying in Fort Wayne, I was completely okay with staying with my friends and the people who had somehow meandered their ways into my life. Let's be honest, I had a pretty scandalous summer... but the people who were there with me laughing all the way were also there lecturing me all the way, and I wasn't mad. I was thankful. A few more beers and one last hook-up and it was back to scholastic monotony. I had a party the last weekend of summer vacation and did what I usually did, vowing to myself that Monday, when classes resumed, I was done with my summer ways. The first 'single' summer that I had was both the best and worst summer of my life. The beginning of the semester marked a time for me to grow a pair and draw it to a close. Honestly, it was kind of sad. Deep down I knew that there would be no summer like it; ever, ever again.

Face to face I was with the fact that a tear hadn't dropped from my face since April. The health that comes from crying was lost on me. This absence started pumping through my veins, stealing my breath. Maybe it was because I hadn't had a drink in five days or maybe it was me realizing that nothing I had done over the last four months really helped me get over anything. It just filled something that I thought needed to be filled without realizing that in actuality it was a problem that needed to be solved.

The first day of classes had me realizing that I was going to be bored as fuck that fall. German, Intro to Interpersonal Communication, Interviewing Principles and Practice, and Music in Social Movements. The music class was the shit and German more than kept me on my toes, but the

majority of my time was spend delving into the typical communication regurgitation that being a Comm major tends to bring. It sucked. So, I took it upon myself to make it more interesting. Skankoid, a long time friend of mine, was the Politics and Money editor for the college paper and she suggested I write for it. I was skeptical at first because of the Communicator's less than admirable reputation, but then I remembered that in most cases, in order to make something better—you have to be a part of it. So, my earliest endeavors with the publication consisted of early practice music reviews. I picked a pretty good week to start writing about music, I know this much. Very vividly I remember my first two albums up for review being *Collapser* by banner Pilot and *Gold Country* by Chuck Ragan, two of the best albums of 2009, but that's beside the point. I knew that by submitting these first two articles that I was going to have at least some sort of livelihood this semester. I was going to be more open to music, I was going to have a better avenue by which to find new music, and I was going to become a better writer.

I continued doing reviews but for some reason that wasn't enough. At the moment, I wasn't particularly inspired about anything; hell... if anything I was the direct opposite. But for whatever reason I wanted to be a bigger part of that publication. So, Skankoid and I came up with the 'Smoke Hut Diaries.' A public forum for me, myself, and I to release and discuss the debauch subject matter covered in campus smoke huts. The topics ranged from bestiality, auto-erotic asphyxiation, politics, bestiality, religion, bestiality, bestiality, the human condition, bestiality, the apocalypse, bestiality, school, bestiality, butt sex, bestiality, homophobia, bestiality, racism, bestiality, and animal rights. Though the Communicator, being a collegiate publication and all, wasn't so keen on the idea of printing bestiality story exchanges, it still allowed me with the opportunity to observe people more so than at my own volition. I was going to be the one to give a voice to a crowd less heard; I was going to be the one to tell the stories of people who couldn't tell them themselves. It was going to be me, the voice of a congregation, to shed light through that tar-stained glass; and I couldn't have been more thrilled.

So, album reviews and smoke hut diaries in full swing, the flood of monotony that engulfed my semester didn't seem nearly as bad. Best of all, I was writing again. I had gone so many months with no inspiration or drive, and now I had this new avenue of expression and outlet.

I was staying two nights a week over at Winner and Amber's place. They lived far closer to campus and work than I did and, being at school five days a week, gas costs in a '91 Camaro would have fucked my bank. It was fucked already, but better terminology would be financial ass rape. It was something as little as this that began the process of Winner and Amber saving my life. Many a late night was spend in that garage, midnight coffee and cigarettes nursing the wounds that college can cause.

September came and went without warning, dawning October closer still. October was my month. On the third of the month, Cinnamon, Jordan, and I were set to meander about Chicago. It was the first time I was allotted the chance to see Brand New live, and in one of my favorite cities no less.

It was a Saturday, early. Windows down and Frank Turner blasting on the speakers, we were on the road. We had our music, our conversation, our weed, and the long, boring ass scenic route to Chicago. We needed nothing more. The skyline was in sight and Jordan, wide eyed and astonished, was preparing himself for a city never traveled. It was still about twenty minutes before we would be on location, but as our anticipation grew we prepped ourselves for a day in Chicago by listening to *Goddamn* by Alkaline Trio, faces glowing and voices screaming.

We pulled into Chinatown, Chicago's best kept parking secret. Ten dollars for the entire day and the Red Line train runs right through it. We locked up our shit and hopped on the train, an entire day ahead of us with no agenda, no plan, and good friends.

New players in the game of Chicago fall victim to tourist traps, yes, but guilty as charged it seems a sin to visit Chicago without making a stop at the bean. The pavement was glaring up at me while the faces of hundreds were gawking

down. It was at this moment though, at the bean in the middle of Millennium Park, that I truly understood how small and unimportant I was. I was stuck between manmade ground and the faces of a fuck ton of people that I didn't know, would never know, and could never know. The simple fact that every one of these faces had a story to tell, no matter how shallow and seemingly meaningless they may be; they were stories nonetheless.

Chicago just holds this innate ability to skew your entire worldview. You can walk around your hometown, searching for a revelation, but in Chicago all it takes is one breath, one breeze, one cab ride... and you can find all of life's complexities and simplicities in none more than a split second. This city breathes, gasping for air and exhaling with the style and grace of a ballroom dancer, learning step by step, beginning with a struggle and finishing with class and finesse.

Throughout the rest of the day I was struggling with the thought of having to leave, once again. I really think it was this particular day in the city that I decided I wanted to move there. I had aspirations of moving to San Francisco right out of high school and that was nothing more than a falsified notion of hope. Denver obviously wasn't meant to happen. But Chicago, a mere three hours from Fort Wayne... that could happen and it was more than possible. I realized too that there must have been some reasoning, something way beyond my own realm of comprehension, that I was still trapped in Fort Wayne. I had so many opportunities to get out, but for some reason I was forced still to be rooted in the Fort. It would still be a while before I truly accepted this.

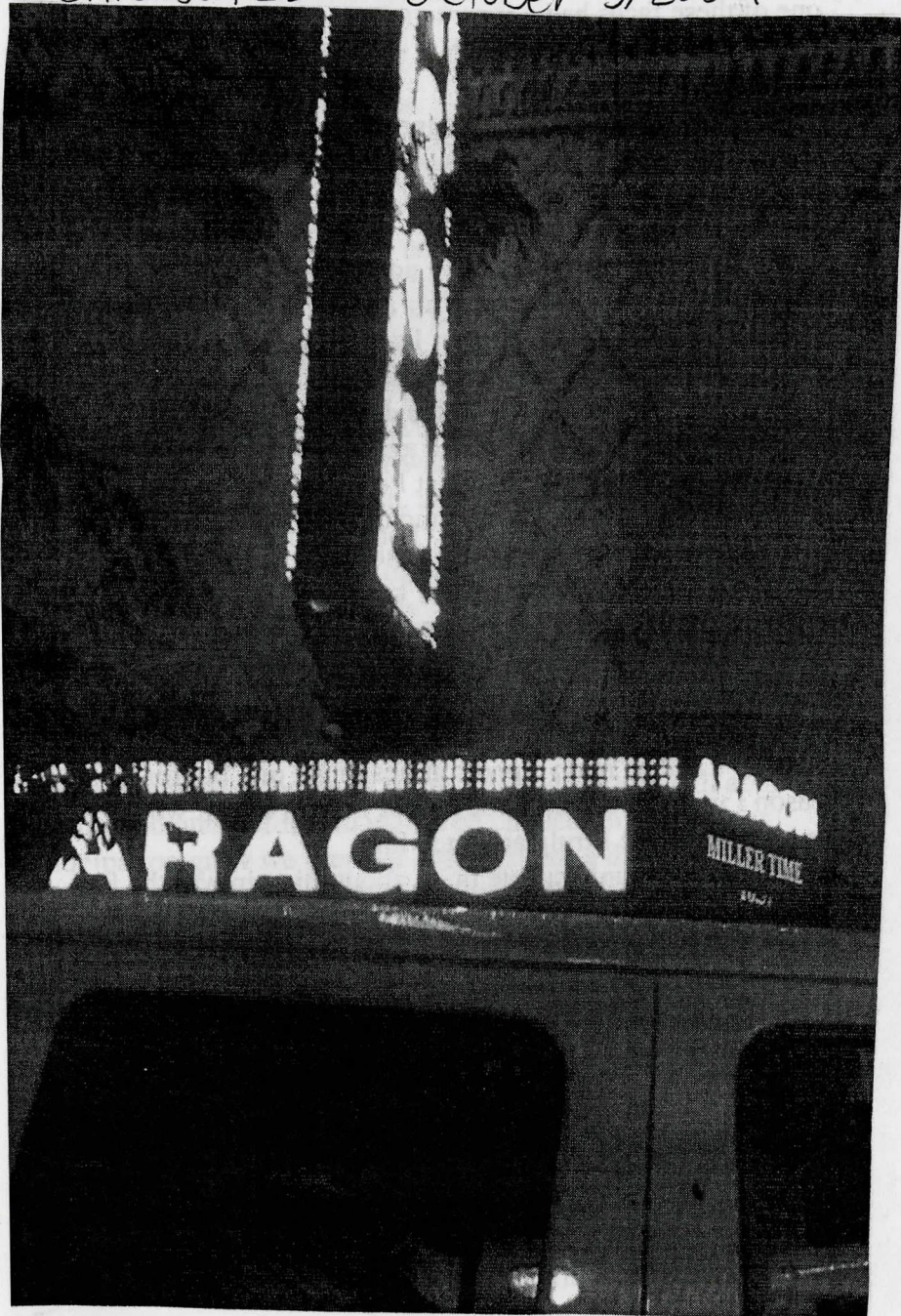
The real unfortunate thing about this trip was the fact that the show wasn't even the most memorable part. It was great, and seeing Brand New had been something I had been looking forward to since I was twelve years old, but everything surrounding that day felt so much more important. I felt like my life was riding on this day, this series of moments. But it was time to leave.

We made our way through the crowds at the Aragon and loaded ourselves back onto the train. Too bad the train wasn't stopping in Chinatown this time around. We got off, no clue where we were, roaming around Chicago at one in the morning, asking cab drivers unstable in their sense of direction

to take us back to Chinatown. It seemingly took us forever but we finally found a cab driver who knew where to take us. We found our way back into the car and began the three hour long lonely ass journey back to Fort Wayne. I had fallen in love.

Chicago, IL

October 3, 2009



I woke up the next day, more asleep than I had felt in months. Monday the 5th held a trip to Grand Rapids with Winner, Zim, and Dan to see The Gaslight Anthem, Murder by Death, The Loved Ones, and Frank Turner. We were all pretty pumped and I failed and refused to acknowledge my exhaustion. Sunday passed and Monday arrived without hesitation. Classes for the day were over and we left, headed to Trine University to pick up Dan and hit the road.

I have never known a glow like this. It was one of those days that it was obvious that autumn was upon us, and the leaves were just beginning to turn. We crossed the state line between Indiana and Michigan and allowed the music to take over from here. Although the drive was over two and a half hours, there was an air about the day that just bode relaxation. None of us really had anything or anyone to answer to; it was the closest that I had ever felt to perfection until that point.

We pulled into Grand Rapids and found our venue, The Intersection. A quaint, small venue that was more than perfect for the show we were seeing that night. Unfortunately, at this point I was still a month away from turning twenty-one. We showed at the doors, tickets in hand, and the bouncer emblazoned a large, black 'm' on my hand. Minor. And, to add insult to injury, we had arrived during happy hour. It was still going on an hour before the show was going to start. Naturally, I couldn't handle it.

The way the venue was arranged goes as follows: the front of the place was a typical bar, but slightly more cozy. The walls were lined with concert posters, tables equipped with lamps to execute dim lighting. There were couches instead of tables and chairs for the most part, and carpet instead of tile. To the right of the bar was a large, silver garage door type of apparatus. The line started there so we followed suit. The door opened to a warehouse type set up, dark and dim, with tables strewn with ashtrays. The merch booth was to the left of us, and upon entry I spot none other than Frank Turner himself standing there, peddling his own merchandise. I was the only one of the four of us familiar enough with Turner to be able to physically identify him, but even still, Winner was just as excited as I to make introductions.

we met Frank, made obnoxious tangirs out of ourselves and got out picture taken with him then found our way to a table to wait out the next forty five minutes until the show was to start. Before anything, though, I made my way to the bathroom to rid my hand of the obnoxious, gigantic black 'm' the bouncer inscribed on me. There was no way in hell I was going to watch Murder by Death without a drink in my hand.

I came back out to happy hour pitchers lingering on the table. So, we drank. Quickly at that. Hell, we had to get our money's worth since the opportunity to aptly presented itself. We made our way to the stage, drinks in hand and a cigarette gracefully dangling out of my mouth. The lights went out and the stage glowed, out walked Turner clad in black with no more than his acoustic guitar strapped over his shoulder.

We were on the cusp of drunk, Frank Turner was singing to us with more heart than I had seen in a live performer ever before. His stage presence was so simply yet it meant so much. Zim, completely unfamiliar with Turner's repertoire, was floored. Winner and I glanced over at him; his face glowing drunkenly in admiration of the music before us. Turner finished his set and made his way off stage, closing with "Jet Lag" and entirely stealing the hearts of everyone in the audience.

Zim, though, still floored by the musical experience that had just befell him, took his ass straight over to the merch booth to purchase a Frank Turner t-shirt. He then proceeded, in a drunken fashion, to dote upon Turner his praises and new-found fandom.

Intermission was over and the Loved Ones went on, an enjoyable set although fairly unfamiliar to us. The set was over, another pitcher down, then before we could realize that he was gone again, we look toward the merch booth and see Zim there, again, talking to Frank Turner. He came back to us and not only was he wearing his newly purchased Turner shirt, but also in hand he bore two Frank Turner CDs, gloating all over again about how amazing he thought he was, drunkenly trading about this new-found love.

Another fresh pitcher and Murder by Death went on. The alcohol was quickly working its way through our bodies as was the music. Our bodies refused to stop moving as the band played, bellowing sounds of the swanky apocalypse, coursing

through the venue. Winner, wide eyed and entranced, planted herself within the music and the thrill I got from witnessing this was enough to let my die happy. I had introduced this musical force into her life and I know that just for this simply fact, she would forever be grateful. Not only for the music, the experience we were having that night, but simply those nights in the garage, me drunkenly spewing music knowledge and being pretentious as hell. She understood the ground I was walking on and although her paths were strewn in a different direction, this was where we found our commonalities.

Murder by Death completed their set and, as predicted, Zim was back at the merch booth... talking to Frank Turner. Red faced and swaying, a shit-eating grin seemingly tattooed to his face, Zim returned to us... wearing his Frank Turner shirt, toting his two Frank Turner CDs, and giddy as fuck that he just had them autographed.

Winner, Dan, and I couldn't help but laugh at the matter. It was adorable in an almost sad kind of way, but we all understood the magic that Zim found in Frank Turner that night.

Gaslight went on as we let our spirits sober. Brian Fallon crooned at the crowd as Winner and I remained front row, Dan was somewhere off toward the back screaming at the top of his lungs about god knows what. They played "Here's Lookin' At You, Kid" and I was weakened. My heart sank and the last notions of company I had officially left the building. The way I felt after that song is still drifting around somewhere on the streets of Grand Rapids.

The show was over, we were sober, and Zim had to make one last stop to talk to Frank. Winner and I had to comment, too, about how great it all was, but the only words I could spit out at the time were of being grateful for his music.

I bummed a cigarette to the guitarist from The Loved Ones so Winner and I shot the shit with him for a while. Soon came our brush with death.

We left the venue and walked back across the street to the parking lot where Dan's car was housed. We boarded and began our journey back to Fort Wayne. We all had an amazing night but we were tired, and just ready to get the fuck back home. A pit stop at Steak-n-Shake delayed us for a bit but we finished our meals and were ready to get on with it. About a

halt hour into the drive, Dan was noticeably failing to stay between the lines. Hell, I didn't even notice due to my state of fatigue but soon it became clear that something involving caffeine or a different driver had to happen stat. We pulled off at a gas station and Dan clearly stated that he needed some caffeine. Zim was passed out but Winner and I were still wide awake fearing for our lives. Dan got out of the car and Winner was relieved, knowing that Dan would come back with either a cup of coffee or an energy drink, something to kick up his game. He gets back to the car and what is he toting? Mountain Dew. Mountain fucking Dew. The fear once again rose in the throats of Winner and me.

But, anxious as we were to press on, we pulled out of the gas station and continued back to Fort Wayne.

Twenty minutes more and we were running out of gas. Little did we know, but all of the money we had given to Dan for gas ended up spent on beer. Were we surprised? No. Pissed? Kind of. So, driver and vehicle running on empty, we again stopped off at a station. Winner agreed to buy Dan an energy drink if he spent the remainder of his bank account on gas to get us home. Death was not an option for the vehicle or its inhabitants.

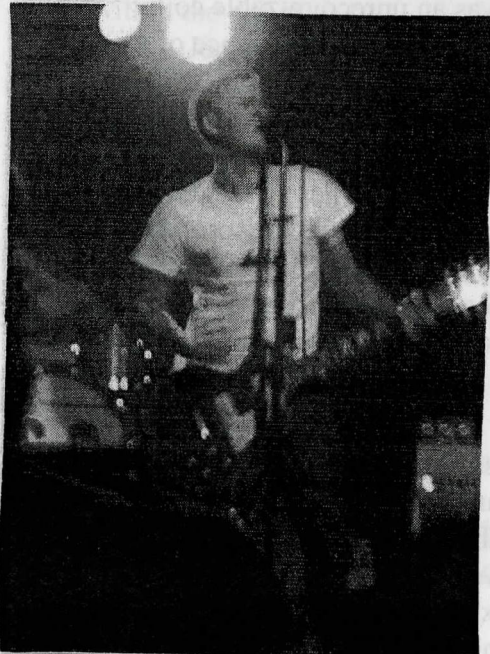
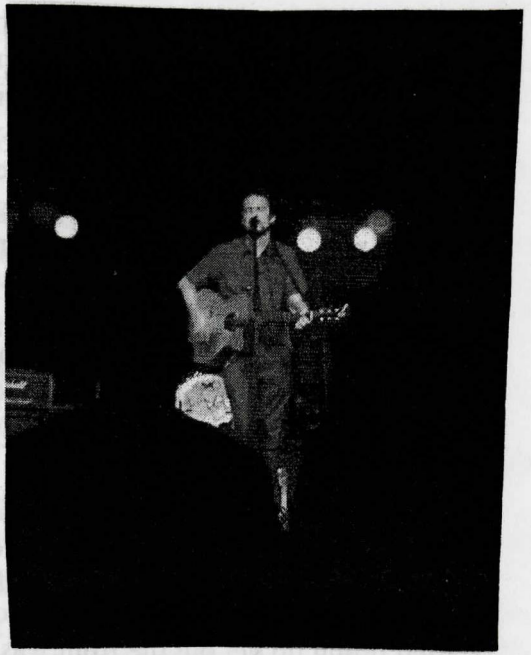
We made it back to Trine. Finally, after almost two hours of feeling like death was imminent, the relief we felt after pulling into that parking lot was like no other. Forty five minutes later and we would be back at Winner's. I put *Caution* on the radio to get us through the drive.



Adam Turka,
Murder
by
Death

Frank
Fucking
Turner

October 5, 2009
Grand Rapids, MI



Brian Fallon,
The
Gaslight
Anthem

I didn't have another show to go to until the 24th so I was set to continue in my monotony for a few more weeks. My days over the last few months were spent in anticipation of this show, one of my favorite bands in their hometown of Chicago.

Celebrating ten years of the Lawrence Arms, waiting in line outside the Metro all day with a half gallon of rum, two full packs of smokes, cards and other drunken die-hards.

The first hundred at the door were promised a colored pressing of the new EP and the first 150 were promised entry to the after party with the band. We showed up to Chicago around nine a.m. As parking is scarce in the North Clark area, we found a McDonald's close to the Metro and paid ten bucks for the day. We were fueled with the Captain housed in a styrofoam cooler in the trunk. Colleen, Allison, and I began sipping on our drinks, Jen decided to wait a while. Riddles and games perpetuated, aiding in relieving our boredom.

We walked down to the Metro to see if people had started lining up yet but the front was still empty. Still, though, I didn't regret waking up at the ass crack of dawn to show up early. I was celebrating the band, yes, but this day was more about waking up than anything.

The Chicago wind was particularly biting, this day especially. I was cold, yeah, but the warmth that surrounded the early parts of this morning was an unrecognizable coil, twisting through my bones. It would be the experience of a lifetime.

It was one and people had started to gather around the Metro doors. Jen had decided to start drinking, but Colleen and I were already stumbling. Classy in our appearance with giant white styrofoam cups in hand, we were there, probably fifteenth or twentieth in line. I wasn't twenty one so I wasn't going to get into the after party but fuck, that vinyl was enough to make it worth being there so early.

So we waited, got progressively more drunk, not only from the alcohol but off of our surroundings. Here, on Clark, a gathering of people coming together in nothing more than celebration for the music they loved. I had always understood the power of music to a certain extent but this was one of those events that can reaffirm everything you hold true. They

weren't waiting in line at two in the afternoon to prove anything to anybody or beat anybody to the punch... they were waiting because that's all there is left to do when something that means so much to you is about to present itself in its purest of forms.

So we continued drinking and mingling outside of the Metro, legitimately drunk at this point. Being purely inebriated off of booze and the Chicago streets creates a wind within your being. You get stuck in the ebb and flow of the city, not your daily monotony, not your routines, and not your inhibitions. You become a part of something greater; it's not godly but almost. It's mundane and other-worldly, mortal and forever.

We continued, as the wind grew stronger we grew warmer. We removed ourselves from seated positions as the Metro staff began monitoring the crowd that had amassed. We looked behind us to find hundreds of faces. Until this moment we didn't realize how big this thing had become.

A black SUV rolled up about ten feet away from us and no other than Neil, Chris, and Brendan climbed out of the vehicle with instruments and equipment. Colleen, Allison, and I lit up for the fact that our collective favorite band had graced the same steps we had, right in front of us. They disappeared into the Metro which brought us to realize what was happening within the group.

Jen, almost twice our age, was becoming belligerent. Granted, all of us were far from sober. We had almost murdered our half gallon, nearly entirely laid to waste, but unlike Jen, we were able to hold our composure. She was staggering, back and forth, on many occasions almost falling into the street. The Metro staff started looking in our direction but hadn't made anything of the situation just yet.

Jen decided she had to take a piss, so she and Colleen walked across the street to some burrito joint. They went, presumably they pissed, but across the street walked Colleen, but no Jen.

"Oh no..." was my initial reaction. Colleen returned to the line with Allison and me.

"So Jen walked over to that bar."

"Are you fucking kidding me?!?!?!? The doors open in less than a fucking hour!"

"Yeah, definitely not kidding. She went to the bathroom and before I made it out of the building I saw her walking over to that bar."

So, instantly pissed and ardently frustrated, I had Allison and Colleen hold our spots in line and I staggered down to the bar to find Jen, poised on a bar stool, with a menu in front of her.

"Jen! What the fuck! Doors are about to open!"

"Oh, I just wanted a bite to eat real fast, don't worry!"

"Jen, no. doors are going to open soon. Put the fucking menu down and get back in line."

"Oh, okay. But look at this real fast!"—as she tries to show me some facebook bullshit on her cell phone, I just snap.

"No, Jen, no 'look at this.' Come with me and get the fuck back in line."

Without further argument, she came with me and stood back in line. It wasn't within fifteen more minutes that the Metro staff came and politely asked Jen to walk across the street to the hot dog stand to get some food and coffee. She wasn't having it, though. So, I said to her, "Why won't you eat there? You've already had a dick in your mouth, what's the difference?" Still, not having it, she continued to stagger on and off the sidewalk. Jen argued her way into getting kicked out of line and out of the show. She walked back to McDonald's where the car was parked, realized that her keys were still with me and called to have me walk them down to her.

"Fuck no! Doors open uh...now! So run your ass down here and get 'em yourself."

So, she did. I handed her keys off to her and back she went to her car for the duration of the show. I sold her ticket to a 17 year old kid who drove nine hours knowing that the show was sold out in hopes of getting a ticket. That made the whole thing okay with me.

Although Jen had the privilege of being there, she hadn't earned it and didn't appreciate it. This kid did and I'll forever be remembered by him as the only avenue by which he got to see his favorite band in their hometown on their tenth anniversary. I guess with every hardship, there is some kind of reward for somebody.

We went in and found our chests against the guardrails. The show was fucking great and the Lawrence Arms were in pure form, Brendan Kelly getting emotional about starting off skimpy and ten years later selling out a show at the Metro. It was emotional for everyone, honestly. I lost a friend that day and gained a new sense of living.

The 32 song set-list ended and Dean, an acquaintance of mine, texted me to meet him outside for a cigarette. I made it out before he did but there was no way in hell I was waiting to light up. I pulled out my busted up pack of Mavericks and started smoking what was probably the best cigarette of my life. The air was cold, I could see my breath mixed with the smoke and the bars all along the street lit up the sidewalks with neon and after parties. Dean and his friends finally showed up to me outside, smoking alone and unable to find my friends. We exchanged experiences then a cab rolled up while he and his fellows piled in.

Less than a minute later, Colleen and Allison found me standing there and we made our way back to McDonald's to find Jen, hung-over, embarrassed, and apologetic as fuck. Before hitting the road again we went in and grabbed some grub, sated our hunger, and began our drive through the night while soaking up the blood that Jen's fresh, open wounds had spewed. The drive back was awkward and to make matters worse, we pulled into a gas station to refuel and Jen realized that through her drunken tirade, she had lost her ID and debit card. Colleen, Allison, and I paid for her malfunction and we eventually made it back. I'm never going to Chicago with a 36 year old again.



October 24, 2009
Chicago, IL

Don't Stop Believing

I woke up at seven thirty to make it to the BMV to get my license renewed. I had to make it to class that day, a perfect autumn Tuesday, at ten thirty and it was the only point of that day that I would have time to piss around at this dreaded bureaucratic establishment. I was pretty pumped, though, waiting in line for countless minutes aside, that when I left the BMV that day, my ID would no longer read 'under 21 until 11/03/09.'

School came and went and right after my twelve o'clock I had a tattoo appointment. I had made the appointment months ago and it was something that meant a great deal to me. Better yet, a few of my closest friends offered to pay for it. Tattoos really make the best presents because whoever was there with you at the time will remain immortalized (at least until you die) on your body. Even if you don't talk to those individuals years from now, in your heart you will always be brought back to a time when those were the most significant people in your life.

Jen was there, we had since nursed our wounds from the Lawrence Arms show and things had been better since she worked her way through the initial embarrassment. Ironically enough, it was a Lawrence Arms tattoo that my appointment was for. Winner was there too, she rode with me after class. I finished getting inked and I was meeting a friend for a drink down at the Green Frog Inn. The waiter brought to me my Guinness.

"You know how that tastes?" I said to my friend Erik seated across from me.

"Pretty good, I'm assuming," he said.

"Yeah... good and legal."

He laughed and I finished my drink over conversation, ready to get back to my parents house for birthday dinner, birthday German chocolate cupcakes, and birthday beers.

I made the drive across town and arrived back at the rents' a little later than expected but it was my birthday, I could get away with it. I chowed down on some baked mac and cheese, my favorite thing that my step-mom cooks.

I had a few close friends meeting me down at the Willows, a bar conveniently located within walking distance from my dad's house. It was me, Sam, Winner, Zim, Amber, Jack, my dad, and step-mom. We arrived at the Willows. I was greeted with a free Jameson and Coke, followed by several Guinness, a few birthday shots, and a few PBR... before we were even set to hit the town.

After a few rounds of drinks we walked back to the house to collect our belongings, part ways with my dad and step-mom, and make our way downtown for more debauchery.

O'Sullivan's was filled with patrons gathered in celebration of my birthday. Honestly I didn't realize I actually had so many friends, let alone friends that deemed my birthday a worthy enough celebration to come out and get wasted on a Tuesday night.

I was there maybe a half hour before I really just started losing track of everything. My booze tally, my primary group, who was there, who wasn't there... The last drink I actually remember anybody purchasing for me was an entire pitcher of Killian's, perfectly emblazoned with a bright yellow smiley face. The pitcher nearly drained, my steps barely straight, I hear my name called over the loud speaker. Karaoke night. Fuck.

I had forgotten that earlier that night a friend from school had signed me up to sing. Drunk as shit, on my 21st birthday, "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey. Pissed that I didn't remember, pitcher still in hand, I made my way to the stage forcing Zim and Cassie to accompany me in this arduous task. I got through the song, which I'm sure was some sort of cruel and unusual punishment to the majority in attendance that night.

It was fun, though. One thing that I was sure of that night was the fact that none of my friends tried to make it their own, this was my night.

Many more shots and drinks were thrown in my direction and much to my misinformation that night... people were placing bets on when I was going to throw up. What was certainly to many people's chagrin it never happened. What did happen, though, was drunkenly tragic.

Jim was on stage, getting into his karaoke song of choice, and it just happened to be a song that at the time, apparently, I really wanted to sing. I began charging toward the stage and by the time I got there my balance was somewhere else entirely. I attempted to step onto the stage, missed, put all of my weight on my left foot, fell into the karaoke machine, and took it down with me. When I tried to stand back up, the pain was so intense, even with the ridiculous amounts of booze coursing through my body, that standing just wasn't something that was going to happen.

The memory of the next forty five minutes is lost, but pictures tell me that I laid there on the filthy bar floor until someone carried me over to a booth to ice my foot. I sat there for about another half hour and eventually said fuck O'Sullivan's, let's go to the Rail.

My friends carried me to the car and the last thing I remember from the entirety of the evening is walking into the rail. That's it. But as far as I know, I continued destroying my liver until three a.m.

I woke up the next day without a hangover and without the ability to put any weight on my left foot whatsoever. I attempted to step out of bed and fell to the floor immediately. I crawled into the hallway beckoning for the assistance of my step-mom and upon sight of me; her reaction was marked with laughter. I pissed, eventually made my way out to the couch, iced my ridiculously swollen foot and ankle for the greater part of the day, and then made my way to class. Crutches, handfuls of painkillers, and eventually more alcohol helped me in curing my ailment.

That Friday, I was going to the gay bar with my mom, a few of her friends, and a few of my cousins. I, again, consumed a surprising amount of alcohol and the next day was set to travel to Detroit to see Bayside, The Bouncing Souls, and Broadway Calls.

Sean had been bothering me for a few days prior to my Detroit excursion, begging me to talk to Broadway Calls' merch girl. He had gotten her number at the same show in Denver and she wasn't responding to his desperation laden attempts at contact.

We got to the show and the merch booth was laden with patrons. It was worth it to wait in line for this though. I finally got up to the merch booth and started talking to her.

"So you know Sean from Denver?"

"Yeah! I gave him my number but a friend of mine knows him and told me he was a creeper."

"Yeah, he's my ex. He's not a creeper though. He's just an asshole. And he has herpes."

"Oh my god! Thanks so much for telling me!"

"No problem, I just thought you should know. He's been asking me to talk to you all week, but you seem like a nice enough girl, I should tell you the truth."

This was truly a small victory on my part.

The show was great, but sucked at the same time. I love Bayside and The Bouncing Souls, but it had been a mere four days since I had annihilated my ankle so I couldn't go nearly as crazy as I wanted to. I still got drunk, I still enjoyed the music, but it just wasn't the same. Maybe for my next birthday I'll avoid karaoke.

Stop Screaming

My ankle had done a fair amount of healing and I was pretty pumped that I was finally able to fit a shoe over it. I had also been working pretty feverishly at doing my album reviews and writing my column. It was a lot of work added on to both school and my regular job, but it kept my lively.

The new Nothington album came out and while I was reviewing it I made a stop at their MySpace page to find out that they were playing in Fort Wayne on the 19th of November. Fuck yes. Finally, a show in town that wasn't only worthwhile, but it was also a show that I'd be more than willing to travel out of town for. This time I didn't have to.

I texted Dean about the show right away because I knew that he would be the only one of my friends that would give two shits about it. He naturally already know about it but it was good to know that if I were to have to go to the show by myself, then there would at least be someone there to keep me in good company.

The day of the show came and I was to give Wayne a lift. I showed up to him and his girlfriend's place to chill for a while before going to the show. The flyer said the show started at eight so we took off to get there around seven-thirty. Dean shot me a text while we were on our way to tell us that there was no cover if you showed up before eight. The night was getting better already.

We walked in only to find out that the show didn't start until ten. Oh well. It would give us time to have a few beers, bully the jukebox, and mingle with whoever graced the Rail with their presence that night.

Immediately Wayne spotted Dean and his girlfriend seated at the bar so we made our way over there after acquiring drinks for some good pre-show conversation. It was great for a while, really, until Dean and Wayne drifted to their own conversation and I was trying with every reach into my brain to make conversation with dean's lady, Oface. She seemed uninterested, though, in almost everything that I had to say. She was incredibly short with me and I really had no idea as to why. It was curious, but I wouldn't let it get to my night in any way.

Wayne, Dean, and I went out back for a smoke and the three of us engaged in lengthy conversation about movies, music, and more of the like. Other people joined in with commonalities aligned. There were a couple of guys there who had waited in line with us for the Lawrence Arms show, so naturally it was fun re-hatching the drunken memory that was that day in Chicago.

I had mentioned something about being a writer so the IPFW newspaper came up somehow (not by my mentioning it, believe it or not) and, low and behold, somebody mentioned the album reviews portion of the paper. I talked about it for a second, not mentioning that it was I who wrote it, and after listening to several people so highly regard it as their source for opinions on new music, I spoke up.

"You know the girl who writes those reviews is here tonight," I said, stupid shit-eating grin on my face.

"No shit?" said one of the guys, "are you friends with her? Can I meet her?"

"Yeah, dude! Hang on a sec."

So I turned around, facing away from the circle of conversation, then quickly turned back around with my hand extended, "Hey! I'm Robin, IPFW Communicator. Nice to meet you."

Everyone laughed for a minute and one of the guys standing in the circle spoke up.

"I read the review that you gave our album."

Before he said another word I knew exactly who I was talking to. Jay fucking Northington. I had never seen what the band looked like so before he introduced himself I was clueless. We talked music for a while after my getting over the initial shock of who I was talking to and I went back inside to meet back up with the boys.

I got myself another tall boy before telling Dean and Wayne who I had just finished talking to. Slightly buzzed and having one of the best times I'd remembered in a while, I decided that I really didn't want the night to end.

A while later, I found Jay and Dean seated at the bar comparing tattoos and conversing. I had lost track of Wayne for a while and continued to hang with Dean and Jay, the show getting ready to start soon. The first band went on and it was just fun, good natured bratty punk rock. I danced, drank, and enjoyed my current situation. It was the first time that Dean and I had really hung out and I found that I really enjoyed his company. The prospect of this new, awesome friend that I had so much in common with was purely thrilling. In a town like Fort Wayne, it is extremely difficult to find anyone with so many things alike, and until this night the closest I had come was Wayne, which was fine, but even though Dean and I hung out very little, I found that what he and I shared transcended anything I had found before. But, as is typical in my case, I had to ignore it. I had become exceedingly good at this.

Nothing played and there Dean and I were up front, screaming every word to every song, fists pumping in the air. Wayne and Oface were somewhere in the back, Dean and I had pretty much forgotten that they were even there. Unfair? Maybe a little, but those were the least of our worries.

Now, I don't remember exactly what happened, but at one point in the scheme of the evening I had point blank asked Oface if she had some sort of problem with me due to hesitance

in talking to me and the great amount of mean mugging she'd thrown my way throughout the night. She apparently didn't quite know what to say and Dean had to hide his jubilation in my calling her out. Not only did this happen, but Wayne who was previously guilty of having romantic feelings for me had returned back to my car to sit out the rest of the evening. I was having a blast and wasn't about to let anything get in the way of my good time.

Dean and I went out back again for a cigarette when I found out that Colleen was having an after party at her place of which Nothington was attending. They left, Dean left, and I went to drop Wayne back off at his apartment before heading over to Colleen's place.

I got there, heard acoustic renditions of some of my favorite songs, drank more beer, and had an exceedingly awesome night. It wasn't until the next morning when I woke up and headed back to Winner's place that after I left the Rail, no matter how much fun I had partying with the band, no matter how great the music was, that something huge was missing.

Play Crack The Sky

The semester was well underway and Winner and I needed a break. We both got out of class around seven twenty on Mondays and the two of us needed a drink.

I'd been talking to Dean more often since the Nothington show and he had a few copies of his zine that he wanted to get rid of so I agreed to peddle them on campus. Also, he was feverishly trying to get me into Springsteen so he wanted to hand a few CDs off to me as well.

Winner and I drove over to Side Pocket where he was working that night. It wasn't truly winter yet but it was sure as shit upon us. The air was at the graceful autumn high, still smelling of burned leaves and impending doom. I hadn't entirely decided what to make of the whole Dean thing just yet.

Nothing at this point had happened, but I felt different after the Nothington show. I couldn't place it in any way, but something in me had changed. It was like part of the bitterness that encompassed my being over the last while had at least somewhat dissipated and all I could do was wonder. What was coming? What was happening next? Then, I reminded myself... nothing. It was the same boring story that my friends had grown tired of hearing, so I just said nothing. Nothing at all. Winner didn't know what I was thinking or feeling, hell I didn't even know. All that I did know was that I needed to, by whatever means possible, get closer to him. It wasn't romantic, it wasn't longing, it wasn't anything I could concretely identify. I just knew that this was a person that, in whatever way possible, I needed in my life.

It took us forever to find the bar. When I texted Dean earlier that day, he told me it was at Georgetown and in my mind, that was simple enough. In actuality, the bar was across the street from Georgetown Plaza, located behind another bar even.

We eventually got there after several minutes of searching. I texted him to tell him we were there when Winner and I seated ourselves at the bar. It was a laid back sort of place; not too loud or rowdy like several of the Fort Wayne bars tend to be. Pretty much, the place was perfect for what Winner and I needed that night. School just has a tendency to get to us in a way that just feels unnecessary. Not only school, but her and I work together as well and at the time, things were just straight up going to shit. Our store manager had become a tyrant, creating her own rules and, even according to her standards, adhering to them sparingly. This is why Winner and I needed a night out.

She and I sat at the bar, talked, drank our beers, and quite simply just relaxed. It was fucking refreshing. When Dean would get the chance between orders, he'd come out and meet us for cigarettes. He gave me a box full of a handful of copies of his zine and six Springsteen CDs, as promised. I ended up selling a copy of his zine at the bar that night, to some doucher who could only talk about his love for Wilco and OAR. As pretentious as this may sound, that's no way to impress me. Also, his ardent lack of appreciation for DIY after

looking at Dean's zine had be damn near infuriated. All he could talk about was imaginary flaws and the lack of proper utilization of white space. He didn't take the time to notice that this publication, completely independently written, constructed, and distributed, consumed this person's free time and the greater part of his life for that matter. Even if imperfections present themselves, that's part of the charm of a zine. This goofy fucker just didn't get it.

I was getting increasingly irritated and I was a few beers in. Winner and I didn't really want to be out too late because, after all, we both still had to be up at the ass crack of dawn the next day. We said our goodbyes to Dean and walked out to the car, seated ourselves, and listened to *Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ* on the way home.

Substitute

Late November was resting on my shoulders and the typical contempt that I held for the season was more than prevalent. From the week of Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve I feel nothing but mourning for all of the people who aren't around anymore. That doesn't necessarily mean people who have died, but face it... life changes. If you're in a room full of people, odds are that maybe one will be around five, ten years from now... if you're one of the lucky ones.

With all of these arduous feelings coursing through my veins, I had several articles due; one of which being probably the most difficult that I've had to write to date. The Smoke Hut Diaries was picking up steam and I had been getting responses, positive and negative, in my inbox. Still, writing that stupid thing was the only thing that kept my blood from running cold and eventually icing over.

The first day of Thanksgiving break was upon me and I had the day off of work. I stayed home, with every intent of writing and fleshing out my stories for next week's issue, but my writer's block was the most incredible, unstoppable, the

most tremendous that I had ever experienced. Nobody was home, the house was quiet save for the din of acoustic leaking out of my computer's speakers. I threw my notebook across the room and brewed a pot of coffee.

While waiting I lit up a cigarette and checked my e-mail and facebook account and Dean was online and he shot me a message. I had sold almost all of his zines on campus, not only supporting him but also the nature of underground publishing in general. It was exciting to be able to talk with someone who had passion, ambition, and wasn't just in the writing game to make a buck. In my opinion, that's where so many people go wrong. Writing is supposed to be about sharing and inspiring; the one glimmering notion of the possibility to change someone's mind, to help someone, to save their life. It's not about lining your pockets with capitalist souvenirs.

My coffee was done brewing so I grabbed the biggest mug out of the cabinet and filled it to the brim. It was going to be a long ass day. I looked outside for a minute, peeking through the curtains in the living room and it was one of those days that was colorfully gray. Most of the leaves had turned and commenced with plummeting, but the sky was dismal.

The clouds were like layered cake covered in gray mold. Its beauty can't be replicated, and even though everything about the weather emanated death, I couldn't help but feel alive. My writer's block sucked, Thanksgiving was next day approaching, and even still; something about me had changed. I'll always remember this day of 2009, the worst year of my life thus far, as truly commencing the changes that were to come.

I walked to the corner of the front room where I had thrown my notebook, picked up the scraps and notes that had flown all over the place, and sat back down at my computer. Dean and I continued our conversation, the topics ranging everywhere. He told me things that day that he claimed he never told even his closest friends; I did the same. We discovered that our common grounds breached the shallow surface of music and movies. Literature goes deeper, as does music if approached correctly, but we found we had that in common too.

Also that day, I found out that he and I had actually met six years prior. It wasn't that I had forgotten about him, I just didn't recognize him. When we re-met at a party back in July, he told me that we had been previously introduced but I was far too shitfaced to believe it. Small fucking world.

This Wednesday, he was doing the same thing that I was. Sitting at home, draining cup after cup, pot after pot of coffee, reading and writing. The disruption of our conversation that day was more than welcome. I had already filled an ashtray, I'm certain he had as well. Until this point, though, we had never talked so fucking much. I had wanted to interview him about his zine a while back but that never happened, simply because he was busy with his own life, I was busy with mine. It seemed that we had found this new sense of time for each other now. It was odd but it was welcome.

So, the day continued, eventually two and a half pots of coffee I had consumed and nearly an entire pack of cigarettes. I was totally and completely coffeedrunk, running around my house like a retarded gorilla without the strength. Dean had to log off to go to work and I needed to make another attempt at working out my writer's block.

He texted me when he got to work and told me about his drive, about how he had consumed so much coffee that he probably would have been better off driving to work drunk (off of booze, that is). We joked for a while longer and we went our respective 'separate' ways, not conversing through technology.

The second I sat back down with my notebook, I wrote the best article that I had ever written.

Everything I Ever Wanted To Know About Genocide I Learned In Third Grade

After a long night of writing, I passed out around three or four, hopelessly longing to be able to sleep through Thanksgiving altogether. I was used to running on little to no sleep so crashing out at four and waking of at eight or nine was no big deal to me or my internal alarm clock. Alas, my eyes opened at nine and refused to stay closed.

I stumbled into the kitchen and put on a pot of coffee. My dad and step mom had already been up for hours preparing food so they were lively as ever, the kids running about the house per usual. Later that day I was going over to my aunt's house for dinner with my mom's side of the family. Not to deliver another 'woe is me' story but a little background is necessary.

I am very much the black sheep of the family. I have tattoos, I'm pierced, I sport unconventional hairstyles, wear dark makeup, and the majority of my wardrobe entails band t-shirts. Not that my people skills are short or anything, but when it comes to certain social situations, I deal in a very different matter. I don't hole up or get quiet or anything like that, I just turn into a complete smart ass. This side of the family doesn't give me the chance to do that. Typically, the second I march through those doors, the only people who don't start making fun of me from the get go are my mom and my aunt. So, as imaginable, this is a very foreboding situation for me considering I loathe the holiday anyway.

That said, the last thing that I wanted to do that day was go over there. I was relaxed and content at my dad's house, just being lazy and being around people who actually enjoyed (or pretended to) my company. It was the perfect situation for me.

Before I ventured out, I was seated on the loveseat in my dad's living room texting and shit, and Dean texts me.

"Happy Tryptophan versus Coffee Day!" I laughed and we texted for a while, he soon shoots me a lyric from my favorite Broadway song and I was shocked as shit. It was

awesome but surprising nonetheless. Eventually conversation ensued about consuming unhealthy amounts of coffee on Thanksgiving and the ever waging war that ensues after undertaking such an endeavor. I'd been there before and I now felt that I had a partner in coffee crime.

Eventually the time came for my sister and I to head over to my aunt's house and I had spent the greater part of the day prepping myself for the humiliation that was sure to come during the course of the evening. Their words to me were typical feral in nature; unassociated with any bridge or manner of society, and completely of lacking disregard for whoever's feelings they are directed toward.

Goiter Cakes and I walked through the door and before I'm even able to say hello to anyone, I'm flamed with remarks about my attire, hair, make-up, and sexuality. Thanks guys! Eventually it died down as it typically does after they get finished making themselves feel better and we can all at least have an enjoyable dinner.

My mom, grandma, and aunt seated ourselves around the table and Goiter Cakes eventually joined. For the first time in years, the flaming around the dinner table wasn't directed toward me.

Grandma: Why did you leave Rob (my dad)? He was so good lookin'!

Mom: (silence).

Grandma: Well, he sure is doing great now. His new wife is sure as hell prettier than his first wife.

Mom: No comment.

Grandma: So, I have to say something awful. This is really terrible but I have to say it.

Me: Alright... go ahead, grandma.

Grandma: I really like the smell of my own farts.

(Insert uncontrollable laughter here)

Grandma: I mean, sometimes when I'm laying in bed I'll fart under the covers and stick my head underneath and take a big 'ol whiff.

(Insert more uncontrollable laughter here)

As we are exercising our gut muscles aptly, my cousin's five year old daughter comes over to the table, probably to see what all of the fuss was about and the only thing that my grandmother could think to say at this point was, "you really aren't that ~~cute~~, are you?"

I guess if anything provides exposure to the caliber of people that side of the family beholds, that conversation does. They aren't bad people, just... spirited.

The dinner dwindled down and I had been texting Dean back and forth all day discussing music, books, Thanksgiving adventures, and more of the like. It was probably the only thing that kept me even mildly sane during the grand scheme of the day.

Goiter Cakes and I headed back to our dad's house to submit the rest of the evening to relaxation. The conglomerate of people that usually amasses during his end of the celebration tend to be significantly more mellow and easy going. We needed it.

Keep Falling Down

Black Friday. Retail. 2-11. Closing shift. No more needs to be said.

I had Saturday off and Dan was in town from Trine. He and I's typical social rendezvous entail stupid amounts of booze and conversations involving me pushing whatever great band I recently heard on him. He was fine with it, though, and even more exciting still it was the first I had seen him since my birthday. So we would have plenty of time over beers to re-hatch the exceedingly awesome evening that was.

He showed up to my house with beers and a milk jug with Jameson in it. I still had half a bottle of standard Jamo left along with the bottle of 12 years aged Jamo he got me for my birthday.

I made a few cocktails before we walked down to the Willows. The only thing I wanted that night was strong, cheap drinks. Nothing more and nothing less.

The entire time that Dan and myself were at my house, Dean and I had been texting. I was lining my gut with whiskey, he was lining his with beer. Saturday rituals were aligned; music, booze, and good people lining our senses of good nature.

Dan and I were finished with having cocktails at my house and I told Dean that if he got the itch to he could shoot me a text later. We walked down to the Willows for karaoke night, well prepared to make asses of ourselves and I was prepared to ignore whatever misconstrued feelings that I was having that night. I couldn't identify it and the only thing I wanted to do was ignore it. Even though things had been going alright for me, I was still pretty lost and I was still a pessimist. I had become content in my loneliness and was convinced that I was meant to be alone. I had my words, my music, and emotional trauma was the least of my concern.

A cigarette cradled between my lips and a cheap whiskey and water seated in front of me, my buzz started to hit. Dan and I had sang a few songs, a few other people I knew were at the bar, and I was having a decent time. But, again, that feeling that was so prevalent after the Nothington show started surfacing and I couldn't handle it much longer. For one, I needed to figure it out. Two, after I figured it out, I needed to do something about it.

I texted Dean, probably some random song lyrics or something, and we began conversing. Both of us less than sober, I can't provide liner notes for the conversation, essentially to avoid sounding like a pretentious douche, but what I can provide is knowledge that the course of this conversation left me more fucked up about any guy than I had been in my entire life.

Here I was, flipping my shit about this individual, completely independently aligned with myself, and there was nothing that I could do about it. Through all of my summer conquests, I was so careful not to breach that border and I wasn't about to start now. I'm not that girl.

What did happen, though, was this. Our conversation never died, we just did. Drunken exhaustion exuded from my eyes, but I was still talking to Dan about it all. He reassured me that even though I was feeling these things, all there was

left to do was wait. I couldn't tell Dean how I felt, I couldn't make any kind of move in any kind of way. I had to hold true to my morals; and that's exactly what I was going to do.

I eventually kicked Dan out because I was too drunk and emotionally exhausted to be of good company to anybody. I crawled into bed and laid there for hours. When I finally shut my eyes, I dreamed of him.

On Monday, Kayla and I had German together and during our smoke break I explained the whole situation to her, as I had been Winner and Amber, even Zim had his input. Winner thought that he was a dog and that I should stay away, but at the same time she wanted to be happy for me, simply for the fact that she bore witness to the mess that I had been for the greater part of the year. Amber's sentiments were similar, but in this situation I looked most to Zim's logic. What he essentially told me was that Dean was either over his current relationship or he was a dog and the only way to figure it out would be time. I understood, no matter how difficult it was for me to wait.

After class, Kayla and I went to Side Pocket so we could grab a few beers and I could give Dean his zine money. The night was normal, though difficult at times. I wasn't doing anything wrong, really, but Kayla kept pointing out that I was making excuses to justify our going there that night. I probably was, but I wanted to see him. I didn't even care.

Too Cold To Hold

That Sunday I got off at seven, had been there since fucking ten am and after the day I had, all I wanted was a beer.

Dean and I had made plans to get either beer or coffee and at this point, all I could think about was beer. I texted him during work and made plans to meet up with him at the Latch String. I'd never been there before but I heard it was a quaint, small kind of place; it sounded like a good idea.

I got lost on the way but eventually found it. It was a few more minutes before Dean showed up, which was fine. I still had half a cigarette to suck down.

His black cavalier rolled into parking lot and as he parked and I saw him open the door, I tossed out my cigarette and did the same. I was thrilled to see him, a chance for us to hang out, talk, and see what each other was really all about; outside of a work setting and outside of technology being the sole method of our communication.

We walked into the bar after exchanging stories about getting lost along the way and the place was just as I had expected. Dark, small, and conducive to conversation. We took a seat at the bar. The bartender took our orders, a PBR for each, and we pulled out our debit cards to open two separate tabs. The bartender said to Dean, "You're going to make a good-lookin' girl like this pay for her own \$1.25 beer?" Dean said back, "Haha, well we'll see what happens."

I looked at him with a raised eyebrow and allowed a nervous chuckle to linger, and we talked. About everything. Music obviously, was prevalent. We talked about writing, books, friends, stories, experiences. Everything.

We ordered beer after beer and eventually they were out of PBR cans, both of our preferences, and then we would have to resort to bottles. With one can left and two of us, we decided to arm wrestle for the last can before switching to bottles was imminent. He won, attempted to surrender his winnings, but I wouldn't allow it.

We went outside to have a cigarette and we started going through the music on my cell phone. "Substitute" by Frank Turner felt appropriate. The song speaks about how he found love in music instead of a lover. At this point, it was the most appropriate song to describe my situation. I was fine with being alone. I had found contentment in loneliness and eventually forgot that it was loneliness that I was feeling. My heart had gone through the ringer and at this point I was over it, so there I was. I had my music, my writing, and my romantic pessimism.

I explained all of this to Dean and it seemed to me that he understood entirely. At one point I got soft and referenced some other lyrics that seemed to ease the harshness of my description. The last thing that I wanted to do was sound overly bitter.

"So I turn off the lights and I turn off my phone, lie on the floor and face being alone. It's not as bad as you think, but I'm pretty sure that I'd prefer some company."

I felt like I redeemed myself after saying this. We finished our cigarettes and went back into the bar, realizing that it was only open for another hour. So, naturally, we continued drinking. We each had a beer in hand and another patron attempted to order a PBR when the bartender informed him that Dean and I had consumed the bar's resources of it. This gave us an odd sense of pride.

Eventually the clock dawned one am, closing time on Sundays. We paid our respective tabs and went outside to my car. We sat. smoked, listened to music. It was freezing but it didn't seem that either of us really noticed, or cared, or cared to notice. Maybe all three.

The bar had probably been closed a good hour and a half, maybe more, and I had to piss. Bad. I was clinging onto some kind of hope that the door may be unlocked. I walked up to it... locked, certainly. I went up to the passenger side of my car and warned Dean that I would be pissing in front of my car for lack of better options. So, sure as shit, I squatted in front of my car and let it roll. I would like to think of the incident as tragically charming.

I got back into my car and was stoked to see that the parking lot was slanted for draining purposes and my piss was so grandiose in amount that it was running down half of the length of the parking lot. Simple pleasures, I suppose, but we had a good laugh about it of course.

We laughed, we talked, we praised our favorite musicians and mourned over life's discourses. We had no clue what time it was but we didn't want to end the night. Exhaustion began to set in, though, and it was time to part. We looked to each other and I had the good sense to uphold my morals. It took the strength of my will not to kiss him that night, but I held true to my values and beliefs. We hugged each other goodbye with a moment of hesitation and when I started my car, I wasn't the same as when I parked it nine and a half hours earlier.

Last Night In Town

I had class at noon on Wednesdays and an almost five hour break between that class and the next. Dean had texted me during my twelve o'clock and we were going to meet up for coffee at IHOP when I got out. We had, of course, been talking feverishly over the last few days; despite my friends being now, more than ever, weary of my association with him. The question they kept asking was 'what guy with a girlfriend spends almost ten hours at a bar with a girl that he wasn't daring?'

I wasn't cracking but I was close, on the verge of just flat out asking what the hell was up; finally seeking clarification on everything.

I pulled up to IHOP and he wasn't there yet, but it was too cold to wait out in my car. It was the first day that winter had truly made its first attack. It was so windy that even walking to the door of the building was like some kind of icy hell decided to forge its existence on my skin.

The waitress seated me and I ordered two coffees. About five minutes later he showed up and sat down, and we pretty much picked up right where we left off at the Latch String; save for the awkward hug at the end of the night. As our conversation gained both speed and comfort, our language became more fluent and abrasive. There was a family of four seated diagonally across from us; a mom, dad, and two teenage children. Amidst our conversation, the father interrupts, "If you two don't mind, could you slow down on the F-bombs?"

Without a second thought, obviously off our game, we obliged. I was flustered, he was too, and any other time either of us would have told the guy to fuck off.

We continued talking, trying increasingly hard to filter our speech, and no longer than five minutes after commenting, mister concerned parent and family left the restaurant and as soon as he got up and left, Dean and I looked at each other and said "fuck that guy."

Shortly thereafter, his friend Dayla called and invited us to Chinese food. We met up with her and Jon and stuffed our guts. The lunch went well and after the two of us, still

flustered in each other's presence, left the premises and got into his car; everything had changed.

"So Oface and I actually broke up last night," he said.

"Oh, shit, I'm sorry," I said as my heart began racing so uncontrollably that you could probably see it in my neck, "What happened?"

"Well things had been getting stale for a while and after she told me that she didn't want me talking to you anymore, I wanted no part in it."

"I'm really sorry if I broke you guys up. Really."

"No, no; you were only a very small part of it. I needed out."

"Well I support you in doing whatever makes you happy."

Conversation continued until we pulled back into the IHOP parking lot. I gave him a hug and went to class. My focus was lost for the remainder of the day.

Dean and I had plans to drink that Saturday and I choked on excitement like exhaust in a closed garage. Friday I got off work and had plans to drink with some friends and they bailed so I went home. I told Dean about my fallen plans so he invited me out to occupy my time.

I drove to meet him and Erida down at Dupont Bar and Grill and the cars were sardines on pavement. So, casting aside our sense of defeat, we all drove back to my house so we could walk down to the Willows.

It was cold, but I don't take coats into bars. I dropped my shit back at my 'rents house and the three of us walked, Dean offering me his coat, I gratefully declining. We walked into the bar; cigarettes still lit, and sat down, the bartender adding pints to our company. So we drank a few there, caught our buzz while struggling to hear each other over the bar sounds and country boys, then we walked back to my house. I still had some 12 years aged Jameson left over and tonight was as suitable a night as ever to knock it back. Erida drank her beer as I made Dean and myself each a whiskey and water and brought them out to the garage so we could listen to our songs and be as loud as we wanted. The smoke I breathed was electric, the whiskey gasoline fueling an evening that couldn't be more positive.

Erida retreated to the bathroom leaving Dean and I in the garage. We rambled, buzzed, into a conversation about being up front, which was everything but what we were doing.

I said to him, "if you have something to say, fucking say it." The smoke cleared from his eyes as he nodded in agreement and as our eyes met, we both knew what each other wanted to say, but evidently it wasn't the time or the place to say it as Erida stumbled back into the garage.

She announced her nausea and they left, leaving me sleepless with only thoughts of him, those eyes, and the night that marked me part of a whole new territory.

I worked during the day on Saturday and the only thing that kept me going that day was knowing that I was hanging out with him that night. Ten to seven shifts on Saturdays are the least favored by me. It's when the shittiest of customers decide to present themselves and fellow associates barely seem to be able to carry their own weight, let alone the weight of hundreds of customers asking stupid fucking questions.

Alas, I survived and needed some time to gather myself. I stopped off at the coffee house down the street to get some reading and writing done, mostly my attempt at relaxation and even more so, an attempt to make the minutes pass faster.

I seated myself in the back corner on the coziest of couches and shortly thereafter my phone rings. Sean. I don't remember why, but I answered and oddly enough it was a cordial conversation based around catching up. I wasn't bitter anymore, maybe because time had passed, maybe because I knew that my life was changing in a way that didn't involve him at all.

I hung up the phone and decided to head back to Winner's to get around. I showered and went out to the garage to have a cigarette with Winner and Amber. Winner said to me, "Wow, you must really like this guy."

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, you actually care about how you smell," she said.

We laughed and I got a text from Dean deciding on a meeting place. I finished getting around and departed Winner's place, riddled with excitement and an optimistic

sense of trepidation. I pulled up to the gas station and waited for him and when he showed up we drove separately over to Shamu's place to engage in whiskey laden shenanigans.

The night was progressing admirably. I got along with his friends swimmingly and, although I didn't know them all that well at the time, I felt that I had found some real friends in these people.

Myself and Dean along with a few others went out to the porch to smoke. The night was cold but fresh, slight hints of winter breezing through the screens. The alcohol had well worked its way into our systems, leaving us miles away from cold. The majority of the group was heading back inside but Dean and I both sat, lighting up another cigarette.

When the others were out of ear shot, I was drunk enough to say what had been on my mind for so long. I was done with holding back, done with being alone, and done with treating my emotions like checked luggage. So I told him.

"You know, life is too short to hold back. You know how I say that if you have something to say, fucking say it? Well I'm saying it now. I've got crazy mad feelings for you and I'm tired of hiding it. So there that is."

He was grinning ear to ear, looking at me, and said, "I'm so happy to hear you say that. I knew that this was going to happen tonight."

My elation overwhelmed me and we continued our exchange, smoking and drinking ourselves into each others arms. Before we re-entered the house I hugged him and gave him a kiss, and without words what we had found in each other was already understood.

Our bottle of Jameson was empty and we still had beers left over, but it was after four and we were a fair amount of shitfaced. I attempted to steal a blanket from Sarah, who had passed out on a couch in the basement, but it ended in a drunken attempt at a shouting match. Dean and I eventually made out way upstairs and passed out on a bed in a loft; I felt at peace.

Let It Rain

Still slightly drunk from the night before, my eyes opened to clouded rays of sun seeping through the windows and Dean comfortable sprawled next to me. My phone rang and it was Goiter Cakes asking if I wanted to go Christmas Tree hunting with the family. I told her that I was still drunk, which was true, but this day was marked with an aura of importance that I didn't want to jeopardize.

We went downstairs to see who was still there; vacant. The music was still playing and we laid on the sofa and talked for a few hours, comfortable with our tunes and our conversations. One vital ingredient was missing, though... coffee.

We rounded up Shamu and went to Bob Evans to enjoy some coffee, grub, and a stand-up routine from our waiter. We were stuffed and well on our way to being coffeedrunk. Shamu went home and our day was open. We had nothing but each other, coffee, and hours.

See, this was so new. I mean, it hadn't been twenty four hours since we confessed our feelings to each other but for whatever reason, I already felt that what we had was timeless. We cared not about the outside world; we cared about creating our own plane of existence and finding contentment in just that. Nothing else mattered but each other.

Our first matter of business was coffee. We went to Half-Priced Books to peruse the remarkably low priced literature, but also to indulge in a pleasant rarity: free coffee. We walked around talking each others ears off and by the time we were finished we had drank all of their coffee. So, in a week's time we drank a bar's resources of PBR and a book store's resources of coffee. I'd say we were onto something.

We went thrifting and laughed about the random findings and contemplated the state of mind it would take to actually wear some of these clothes. We went to Dayla's and hung out, then to Dog'n'Suds for my first ever Chicago hot dog. After the grub he took me back to Shamu's to get my car which took the greater part of a half hour to get started. Once my wheels were rolling we went back to my house for more coffee, more conversation, and more hours to revel in what we had so newly discovered.

We talked through several hours, eating holes into the night. The ashtray was overflowing and we had drunk so much coffee that it was a marvel that either of us was ever able to sleep again. I was so used to doing these things alone that it was odd having company that was also willing to submit their body to such torture. Hell, I'm only twenty one years old and my stomach would probably be better off going through a paper shredder. But, alas, I had found someone who was just as bad off as I was and I had to embrace it. I feared it, hell yes I did, but I couldn't push it away. I overlooked every grain of fear and trepidation that coursed through my body and was willing to deal with it until it settled at the bottom. I, the girl who was 'made to be alone,' had found my other half.

The Redness in the West

He brought me coffee during my fifteen minute break at work. It was a slow night and all I wanted was to see him. Even if it was only for fifteen minutes it didn't matter.

We walked outside and sipped our coffee on the loading docks, I was under his arm, the most comfortable that I had been all day. We talked and ranted about our days, still reveling in the new. Since my semester was boring and this late into it I was more than over it, I decided that I wanted to see him again that night.

He left and I finished out the last two and a half hours of my shift. I got out around ten and he picked me up to go to O'Sullivan's. It was the first time I had been back since my karaoke incident and ironically enough, it was karaoke night.

We had our beers and ran into several familiar faces. An empty booth befell us where we sat and made fun of people's inapt singing abilities, bad tattoos, and general douchebaggery. I was happy to find someone who found the same things funny and slightly disturbing about the human race.

As the alcohol flowed so did the inhibitions. Discovering that over the last few years he and I were almost always in the same place at just the wrong time was a mind

fuck. It's insane to think of someone being there for the last six years, but as I walked out of whatever given room, it seemed that he was entering just as I shut the door. We found that damn near everything that had happened over the last few years, even our entire lives for that matter, had lead up to us getting together.

I was comfortable scared, fearful for what I already knew to be true. He was 'the one,' and to be so solid in knowing something like that so early on is enough to throw someone into shock. But I went against the current and listened to my gut.

The evening rolled naturally and at one point in the conversation we kissed, the first real kiss that we had. Every muscle in my body turned to plasma, warming more with every passing second. We left the bar and he was dropping me back off at Winner's. We kissed in the car to the roar of *Cocktails and Dreams* until three in the morning. At this point the hardest thing that I ever had to do was leave the car and go back into the house. I kissed him once last time, looking into his boiling eyes and I said good night. When I got back into the house and laid down on the couch, I realized that however unrealistic my friends would see it, no matter what anyone else would say that I, in the purest sense of these words, was in love.

You've Got So Far To Go

He had just got off work, both jobs this day. It was cold, he was tired, but we missed each other terribly. The night before was spent with shitty singers singing shitty songs. We sat in the back of the bar, talking, experiencing each other's lips, eyes, and touch. Waves of warmth soared through my bloody rivers, mixed with Pabst and emotion. I felt at home. He drove me back to Winner's and I wanted nothing more than to stay in that car with him forever. My heart about to crack open my sternum and spill out on the car seat, I had to go. He had to sleep. One last kiss and we parted ways. Up until this point, it was the hardest it had been to get out of a car.

I showed up at Side Pocket about eleven. I could tell he was exhausted. Fuck, I was too. But after a night like last

night, I wanted nothing more than to see his smile, yellowed and crooked, but beautiful and comforting. His eyes glowed like searing blue fire, blue from toxins and waste. The toxins being yellow smoke and alcohol, the waste being his insides. Mine were the same. We got into the car and drove over to an empty bar down the street, the walls lined with lush sofas and chairs. "Two Strohs," he said to the bartender. He handed me a beer and we made our way over to the furthest corner in the bar. We sipped our beers and made ourselves comfortable, his arm around me, my head resting on his shoulder. Talking about nothing in particular, the conversation was still enriching. The words emerging from his mouth ringing facts through my head, sending earthquakes through my body. It was simple but great.

It was fairly obvious how tired the both of us were. We went outside for a cigarette, came back in for one more beer, then he took me back to my car at Side. We parked the car and accepted music. We were parked underneath a streetlight, the white beams beating down on his black car, our faces both illuminated by the glow. He pulled me to his lips and kissed me, a deep, heartfelt lunge at my mouth. I lunged back. The music, our exhaustion, our warmth breezing through the smoke stained air.

Winter

We made a pit stop at the liquor store. Our livers thirsted for whiskey and forties. The wind was low and biting, cutting our faces the second we opened the car doors. It didn't matter. We had each other, the night, and soon our bottles. After deciding on a fifth of Jameson, a forty of Mickey's and MGD, we began to ask ourselves where we were staying that night. We didn't know. We didn't care. It was best to think it over at the bar.

We walked in and the tables were lined with friends and smiles, ours soon added to the mix. He ordered us a pitcher of Killian's. The bar was out of pitchers so we drank cup by cup, it didn't bother us any. We were happy to be there with friends, each other, jokes, camaraderie, and the warmth that the alcohol and situation invited.

We broke for a cigarette and I was clad in nothing more than my jeans, a t-shirt, and a black hoodie. Not wearing a coat felt like insanity, but I was warm. Dark beer drowning my liver and the barrage of warm feelings gathered from his smile were the only insulation I needed on this particular Indiana winter night.

My friend Travis was visiting, on leave from the Navy, and he called us up to meet him for last call at O'Sullivan's. We left Side Pocket and met him, greeted with Irish car bombs and bottles of Pabst.

The bar was crowded but the environment was inviting. We slammed our drinks and went back to Travis' house which was located almost directly behind the bar. We stayed up drinking for hours, listening to music and talking. The three of us made the night great, giving an official 'fuck you' to winter and everything bad that it entailed.

Need You Around

It was Christmas Eve and I worked a 10-7 shift. Winner and I had the same hours so we rode in together, I leaving my car parked across the street from her house.

The work day came to a close and we left the building, Winner calling Zim as soon as we got off. Something about her voice during the small bits of the conversation that I paid attention to seemed off, something bad had happened. She looked at me and said into the phone, "I'll let you tell her." So she handed the phone to me.

"Hey, what's up?" I said with a note of worry.

"So, somebody hit and ran your car and it's at the impound," he said, hesitation in his voice.

"What the fuck?!?!?! They impounded it?"

"I didn't see it, but apparently it was so bad that they had to get it off of the street."

"But they didn't try to find me? They didn't call me? They just took it?"

"I told you all that I know, we'll talk more when you get here."

I was shaking I was so pissed as we pulled out of the parking lot. I called Dean right away to tell him that plans had changed and that I needed him to meet me over at Winner's to try to figure this whole thing out. Yeah, I had Winner, Amber, and Zim... but I needed Dean.

We got back to the house and Zim had already got the number that I needed to call from the phonebook. According to the report, my car wasn't destroyed to the point of it being hazardous on the street, but due to the ice on the road, the impact had caused it to slide thirty feet forward and in front of someone's driveway. Because of the holidays, though, I wasn't able to get it from the impound until the following Monday.

This was the first holiday season that my depression was minimal, that nothing bad had happened to set the season off, that I was actually okay. Then, this shit has to happen. I had Amber make me a stiff drink so I could calm my nerves before I called my parents to tell them the news. I sat and drank for a few minutes and picked up my phone, dialing my step-mom. I was near tears while telling her the story, and I told her that dean and I would soon be on our way and that when I got there I didn't want a word said about the incident.

I finished my drink and had Amber make me another because my nerves still weren't at ease. It was an infuriating situation. I was I was mildly upset about losing my car, but in the same sense, it was just another material possession being stripped away. What I was more upset about was humanity at this point. I am a good person, minding my own business for the most part, not inflicting pain or strife on others. Karma did not serve me right on this one. I, a true and firm believer in Karma still, knew in my heart that whoever did this to me would eventually get theirs in one way or another.

I finished my drink and dean and I made our way to my parents' house where we drank more, listened to music, and did what we could not to ignore the events of the day but to make good with it.

He and I made mixes for each other and we broke from the family festivities to go out to his car and listen to them. It was eerie to find that three quarters of the songs on each CD were the same. We hadn't previously discussed the content that each CD would hold and this night more than ever rang

true that we were halves.

As much as my car getting hit and ran and later discovered completely totaled really fucking sucked, I had him. I wasn't about to let something as trivial as a car ruin me. If anything, it created me. It created us.

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Date 12-24-09	Time	Veh. Mile.	
Make of Car 91 Chevy CAMARO			
License No. [REDACTED]		Color MAROON	
Serial No. [REDACTED]			
Location NORTH LAKE & PARKER			
Cause HIT SKIP			
Ordered in by FWPP			
Hold for HIT SKIP			
Charge [REDACTED]			
Owner [REDACTED]			
Address [REDACTED]			
Date of Release			
Signature [REDACTED]		12-28-09	
To LOT		Towed by HJ #9	
P.O.		R.O.	
Tow Charge 44.00		460-2	44.00
Mileage		460-4	60.00
Labor 60.00		466	
Storage Days		246	
Total		225-0	94.00
Remarks:		220-0	
		Control No.	

[Signature]

100 Resolutions

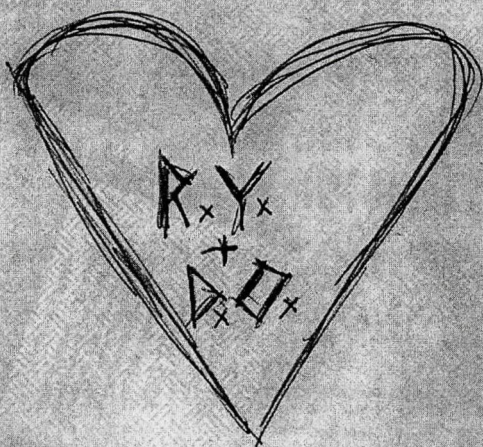
Dean was shocked as shit to discover that I had never had a midnight kiss on New Year's Eve. My previous New Years were spent drunk at my parents' house with Josh who was concerned more with depleting his liver and being a jackass than giving his girlfriend a kiss when the clock struck twelve. It was something that I had become accustomed to.

This New Years we were only spending a portion of it over at my dad's and then going over to Moshboy's for a party as he was in town from the Air Force. We got there and settled into a game of Kings immediately, Dean and myself switching between whiskey and beer. The game became increasingly ridiculous and it was probably the most fun I'd had playing Kings ever.

The night progressed, the music roared, and there wasn't a single vein of trouble to be found. The night was pure, happy, fresh. We were all aligned to the same cause, giving one final 'fuck you' to 2009. It was both the best and worst year of my life. I endured two terribly dramatic break-ups, became a borderline alcoholic, shared beds with too many suitors, and subjected myself to more monotony than anybody should ever have to endure. But everything lead me to Dean. With that in mind, I would endure 2009 again in a heartbeat.

What was even better about the night is the fact that not only were Dean and I bringing in a new year together, but we were also bring in a new decade together. We had forged our relationship in the dead of winter, showing our strength and love with gritted teeth and kisses that broke the shivering. We had found what we had been looking for our whole lives.

With champagne bottles in hand, the ball was dropping and our hearts were racing, smiles glowing that could put an end to war. 2010 dawned. Dean kissed me at length, my first New Years kiss. We popped our champagne and ran upstairs to scream "100 Resolutions" at the top of our lungs, closing out any awful connotation of the year before.



If you liked what you saw, feel free to shoot me an e-mail at robin.yougrave@gmail.com. You can order more copies, tell me to get bent, or simply say "hey!"

- A few other zines to watch out for:
- Earn Your Sleep #2 by Dean Omite
 - Coffee drunk #1 by Robin Yougrave (that's me!) and Dean Omite
 - The Chubby Funster (released each month) by a collection of local writers

SUPPORT DIY AND
TELL YOUR FRIENDS!

Thank you and
goodbye.

THIS FIRST ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO
ALL OF THE PEOPLE WHO CREATED
AND RUINED ME IN 2009.
THANK YOU, AND FUCK YOU.

SUPPORT DIY AND
TALK YOUR FRIENDS

Thank you and
goodbye