

**Throw  
That Bottle  
And  
Let Me  
Shoot  
At It**

**#2**

Props to my boys on Hwy. 11, D, and K.

All stories by D Bradley Williams

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# Fresh homemade coleslaw

That's what it said on the menu which was pressed flat to a small 1/4 inch rectangular piece of plywood. It was a restaurant with a theme, a dressed up place. One big facade of a country cookn' catfish place sitting on the edge of a pond. And that place got some damned fine coleslaw too! They bring it out to you at the table. Free. As an appetizer. Boy that coleslaw sure is good the customers say to the servers. What's the secret? They ask.

I never liked to serve. Too much talking to people. I'd rather work in the kitchen where I can cuss the whole damned thing.

But boy I just can't get over how good that slaw is. I hear this all the time from the servers. We go through gallons of the stuff. Each batch is 50lbs. of cabbage, 2 gal. of mayo, then some vinegar, spices, sugar, onions, and carrots. All mixed in with two hands, sometimes four. But that's just if you had to double team it cause you were running behind. Good 'ol slaw.

There's this guy who worked back in the kitchen. He was sorta' big. As in drinks a lot of beer big. He also would do blow. That was his thing. Coke. But despite all the coke he was slow as hell. We all called him Speed bump. Not cause of the blow but because he was always slowing us down. He used to get all freaked out when the manager was in the kitchen and we'd call him speed bump. Man don't call me that while she's around.

Anyway, on many days while making vats of world famous coleslaw it was common practice for Speed-bump to eat some of the freshly prepared slaw. "Tasting the mix." He'd say. He would grab a handful of slaw, shove it in his mouth, right over the rest of the slaw and chew, mayonnaise coated cabbage dripping from his mouth back down into the vat of slaw. He would laugh the whole time.

It would not be out of place for if someone said to Speed-bump "don't eat over the slaw" that he would purposefully spit half chewed slaw back into the vat and mix it on in. So no one said shit to him. It did no good. You just don't think about it and it's okay.

Yeah.

How in the hell can you not think about it! An overweight guy on speed spitting chewed up cabbage into the famous, so damned tasty coleslaw. And the whole restaurant would feed off it. There was over 200 servings of slaw in one of those vats. He made 2 a day. That's around 400 people; mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, babies, grandparents, your girlfriend or boyfriend sitting in the restaurant eating slaw flavored with Speed-bumps spit and loving every bite of it.

# Preheat to 450

I got up from a fresh dinner of chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes, and English peas to answer the phone.

"Hello"

"B-----what's up?"

"Hey Chrux how's it going?"

"Alright just calling to see how you been...."

"It ain't been much, working everyday and drinking, want to get out of town but can't car's, broke."

"It sucks up here too I work for a bunch of cocksuckers— waiting tables...."

"You make out ahwright with that thought."

"...\$400 in a weekend."

"Fuckn'A that tis some more cash."

"Their all a bunch of rich fucks." said Chrux with indignation. "I've got talent. I know things these people will never know. We both do."

"I don't know."

"...." Chrux was thinking something like (godamnedit he's gonna' end up fuckn' stupid like the rest of them.)

"...."(Chrux needs to relax.)

"How are all the boys up there?" I asked.

"They're all fuckn' stupid."said Chrux.

"Damn that's harsh. What happened?"

"Little D beat the shit out of some guy in his mothers kitchen the other night."

"What the fuck?.... hey hold on man let me go and get my dinner or it's gonna' get cold."

"Alright...., ....?"

Back in the kitchen, where in the hell is the salt? I look around for it and find it in the crack between the stove and the frig. I got it out with a long wooden spoon.

"Sorrytooksolong couldn't find the salt." I said took a chicken nugget and scooped up a mouthful o mashed' taters and peas. Peppered and salted to perfection.

"You don't need to eat that stuff anyway. It'll kill you. When your older you wont be able to eat it."

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"Don't lecture me on sodium consumption you bitch. What happened with D-money?"

"Yeah, D, me, and some big guy who D picked up in Roebuck were drinking in the basement, shooting pool, and I came upstairs to get a bite to eat. Like I always do. And then I layed down on the couch and passed out. D woke me up and was real jumpy n' freakn' out I guess he was scared cause the guy was a lot bigger than him. He brought me into the kitchen and on the floor passed out was that big guy with his pants down around his ankles. I thought 'shit D knocked him out and fucked him....'"

I thought that was pretty funny.

"D fucked him in the ass." I said.

"No. Listen. D said after I went upstairs the guy asked were the bathroom was; the one in the basement was messed up so he told him to go upstairs and use that one. D said he heard some crashing sound and thought that dude fell or something and when he got upstairs the son-of-a-bitch was standing on top of the coffee table. D said he just thought that the guy was being drunk and stupid, he didn't think too much about it, D showed dude were the bathroom was and D went to the kitchen to get a drink of water, when he walked back to the den the guy was standing in the doorway to the garage laughing acting like he was gonna piss right there on the steps to the garage."

"What the fuck" this is me talking "ya'll should of kicked his ass then."

"Yeah--Listen, D said that he told him again, showed him, where the bathroom was then D walked back to his room. He got something. I don't know what he was doing, but when he walked back down the hallway no one had been in the pisser. He said he stepped around the corner into the kitchen and dude was standing with the refrigerator door open and was pissing into the crisper. He was pissn' all over D's parents produce."

"You got to be shlitn' me."

"D said that's when he flipped. He pushed the guy and hit his head on the kitchen counter. That put him on the floor. I don't know how D threw that guy around like that only thing D can whip is his meat. But that's when he got me up. I guess so he'd have some backup if the guy came to and wanted to kick the shit out of him."

"So D knocked the son-of-a-bitch out. I'm proud of him." I told him "when'd you all start drinkn'?"

"All afternoon. But it was the big fuckers beer. I kept doing card tricks for him and he kept buying beer." Chrix said.

"You don't remember his name?" I asked.

"Listen. It was late and raining I was drunk and wanted to sleep. And I sat at the bar while D made this dude clean out the refrigerator. D was pissed. I just sat there and tried to break-in a new deck of cards, while D was yelling "YOU PISSED ON MY FUCKN' PRODUCE, MAN, FUCK YOU!"

I said "That's right.... you don't piss on a man's produce."

"Yeah the dude washed it all off and started to put it back in the crisper and D's like "DON'T PUT THAT PISSED ON PRODUCE BACK IN THE CRISPER THROW THAT FUCKN' SHIT AWAY!" Then D was like get your shit I taken' your ass back to Roebuck. It was 3 A.M., raining and D made me get in his mom's truck with him so he wouldn't have to ride alone with the drunk fucker. Roebuck's about 30 minutes away. Drunk driving through the rain about halfway there D says "when we get to your place Im gonna' go up and get my CDs I lent you." And the guy was like "yeah bitch, you do that, come on up in my house." D didn't say anything. He pulled over on the side of the road and we pushed the fucker out half way to nowhere in the rain. We drove off and the guy was staggering on the side of the road. D said "Fuck it, those CDs suck anyway."

Then I said to him "Shit, my food's got cold listen' to your ass."

"You ain't gotta' talk. I hate the fuckn' phone anyway. Preheat your crusty stove to 450 throw that crap in there take it out and eat your salty slop. Gi'me a call If you make it up this weekend."

Click.

I guess I can put this plate in the oven for a few minutes.



# The invention of the plastic milk jug, and other minor tales

"So were are you from?" He asked.

"Cullman." Said she.

"Yeah? I've got some friends from up there...." Fade out the conversation. All that happened here was that they played the 'do you know this person bullshit pass the time routine.' Work was slow now that the lunch rush was over. It felt like 200 people had charged through the door of the bagel shop all drooling for blueberry and lox bagels. This was the only good part of the job. After lunch rush. The 'do you know....' bit is over and the conversation shifts to other routes.

"What do your parents do?" she asked him.

"My mom's a teaches Home Economics. My dad's an insurance salesman.... what about you?"

"Well I'm not supposed to talk about it.... but we have a family business."

"What ya'll own a store or something....construction company?"

"No."

"That's aw'right you ain't gotta' tell me."

She has this look in her eyes that lets it be know she wants him to push her into saying more. But he doesn't pursue the question any further. A few minutes later she walks over to the make line were he stands doing nothing cause after lunch is over the restaurant is dead. (A boring segway)

"You really want to know?" she asks.

"Know what?"

"....never mind."

A server lays a ticket in the window "Order in!" She said avoiding eye contact with him, then "loser" she adds as she walks away turning her head ever so slightly so that he could see the smile in her lips.

"What's her deal?" the girl asks.

"Nothing....she just thinks she's cool or something....read this ticket.... peanut butter and roast beef on a apple bagel....what the fuck..... tell me about your parents."

"Okay but don't tell anyone who works here only one of the owners know but that's it."

"Alright."

"I'm adopted. None of my family is white, their Italian... I guess they think they need to treat me special or something."

"What do they do?"

"They buy me stuff like my Honda... and they buy me clothes."

"Then why do you work here?"

"It's my Papa Louis idea he thinks it will make me appreciate the value of money."

"Well what does your family do...." he says as he reads the part of the ticket that tells him the roast beef needs to be heated. So he throws it on so wax paper and puts it in a microwave "....who is Papa Louis?"

"Okay don't tell anyone, but my family is into the mafia." she says lowering her voice.

"What? Don't bullshit me."

"Huh.... You wanted to know...."

".....alright."

The beeper on the microwave sounds, he takes the roast beef out and puts it on the bagel with peanut butter, lettuce, tomato, and mayo. He puts the ticket in the window. Order up.

"Yeah my dad is this older Italian man who speaks with this accent and wear gold rings on all his fingers and drives a limo." said the girl in the back.

"He drives a limo?"

"And he has a driver, we call him Cliff."

"Alright."

"But all the money comes from Papa Louis...."

"....and who is Papa Louis?"

"That's not really his name.... I mean Louis is I just call him Papa Louis cause of my brothers....he's my grandfather." Her eyes shift looking at something over his shoulder. "Yhep, Papa Louis he's great, he always takes care of every one of us if there's any trouble. One time my brother, I have 6 older brothers and 4 older sisters....."

".....are they all adopted?"

"No just me...."

"Alright."

"Are you listening?"

"Yeah go on."

"Okay one time one of my brothers got his car stolen. And he came to Papa and Papa told him he'd help him. In two days my brother had his car back."

"How'd he do that?"

She didn't say anything but she had this look on her face which was, he supposed, to indicate a certain understanding of an illicit underground operandi. The server is slow getting the order out of the window. But when she walks up his mind shifts lanes and it's ....your



sexy....legs....rock hard calves.... she looks at him and squints her eyes. Don't be so obvious dumbass. He thinks as the waitress takes the order from the window and walks away, her butt moving underneath her pants....god she must really hate me....do I need to quit thinking like this?....my mind....I have become a monster....ha ha ha haaa....

".....yeah Papa Louls...." says the girl in the back.

"Yeah waz up wit de old Papa?"

She look askance at him as though he might have come close to saying the wrong thing. You shouldn't talk about Papa Louls like that.

"No, really tell me what you were about to say."

"Okay" She got back into the story mode "well this is how the family got money....Papa Louls invented the plastic milk bottle."

"What!?"

"That's right. He also started Bath and Body Works stores. He owns patents on all the plastic bottles in those stores. And he owns two factories that make just plastic bottles." she said and stood looking at him holding her mouth so that you couldn't really see her lips. Her eyes were almost perfect circles on her head and her mouth a fold in the skin between her nose and chin. What if when she starts talking again her lips have grown together and.... she'd look like those creatures in Beast master the eagle people who sucked all the meat off the bones of their victims by rapping their wings/arms around them....

"I'm gonna' go wash the dishes" she said kinda' short and snappy like she was pissed that he didn't seem to listen to her story.

"Order in! Loser." said the little fireball of a waitress.

# Blue flowers

He was walking down the sidewalk looking at the green of the clover and the white of its spring time flower....

"....he wont stop calling me." She had said.

"....tell him to fuck himself." He had said.

"....but he's gotten crazy. He bought a gun." She had said.

"A lot of people have guns." He had said.

"But.... I've tried to get him to leave me alone." She had said.

"Well next time he calls just say 'Andy there's something I need to tell you' then he'll wait and you say 'go blow your fucking head off.'" He had said.

....a car with one head light passed as he walked on down the sidewalk. He took a deep breath and smelled the sweet odor that he thought was from some blue flowers on the side of the street.



# Cats in the sky

Two fellas, one named Ben the other Chuck, sat outside on the front porch smoking cigarets.

Out of nowhere Ben comes in with "Cats man cats.... don't you know man cats can read our minds.... they know ESP."

Chuck responed with "What man? Where'd you get that?"

"All you gotta' do man is watch 'em. You see it when you look at them and then they look at you they already know that you were gonna' try to figure them out."

"Man run that by me one more time."

"They already know you are looking.... before you look.... they already know.... just watch 'em enough and you'll start to wonder who's watching who?"

Chuck spit on the ground between his feet "Where did you come up with this?"

"We used to get a lot of mushrooms out of the pastures around town, I had some when I skipped school oneday and ate 'em by myself, I had this cat named Skruff, and I was getting high on the caps and for some reason I started thinking about Jesus like I had done something wrong and I was.... I don't know man but I went to pick up Skruff and he backed away from me, started hissing and skatching at me." Ben jerked from side to side making clawing motions. "Skruff knew what I was thinking man he knew that I was going crazy and I didn't even know it myself."

"What the fuck, you got high and thought that your cat could read your mind? Your wacked."

"No man, I learned from this one guy I met and he told me that cats talk to other planets. They're like transmitters to other worlds. Just look at their eyes. They transmit our souls through space...." Ben looked to the sky and laid his hands in his lap. Chuck spit on the ground between his feet. He'd been spitting in this same spot for a while and had puddle of spit a little bit bigger than a half dollar. "and also," Ben started back in "I don't know about this one, this seems kinda' crazy but, he said that their tails are really antenas...."

"What? Where did this dude come up with that?"

"Ah....man....man...." he said snapping his fingers, and "I know I can remember it." he said moving around in his set like you might move around if you asshole was on fire. "It's a book by this guy who used to teach at Yale and then moved to Russia to study some tribe of

people....ah there are all kinds of stuff about it.... I can't remember the guys name...."

"Who told you this?"

"Man this really cool brother I met in Atlanta last summer. He knew all kinds of stuff."

Chuck drew his eyebrows together in the middle and looked at Ben "No shit?" he said "some dude really told you that?" and he added some more spit to the buddle.

"Sho'nuf" said Ben as he tilted his head back up towards the sky.



# Argo

1

The grass needs to be cut. There's a trail worn across the front yard from the road to a yellow duplex. It's a hazy day. Clouds cover the sky. It's possible that the neighbors in the community think the occupants of the duplex to be lazy. Or poor. Maybe dirty. Some say that a well manicured lawn is a sign of self respect. And this yard ain't gonna win the gardening associations medal. But the flowers, the flowers are always pretty. Bucks mother as well as her mother have always been attentive to flowers; Yellow/orange marigolds the little black faces on the purple and yellow pansies, a banana plant or two that will never produce even one small green banana in this part of Alabama. They are grown for decoration. All surrounded by rocks that Bucks mother found in the field across from the duplex. The grass though, that's the responsibility of the land lord. He owns not only these duplex apartments, but a bar-b-q restaurant, and a large track of land that runs from one side of Hwy 11 all the way over past Bear Mountain that's west of the tracks. It might even stretch over to Finney Hill. But I'm not sure. He's been in the process of developing this land over the past four years. But no one who is from the town moves into the houses he builds there. It's only out-of-town people who move there. They're big homes \$100,000 or more for one. Along with this subdivision he owns a row of ratty duplex houses that sit on the edge of a 50 acre hay field. Inside on half of the duplex with the tall grass and blooming flowers, strewn out on the orange kitchen counter the familiar black and white pages of a news paper. Next to it on the counter is a glass half full with what looks like grapefruit juice and a half eaten waffle. They lay there left over from breakfast. Outside the wind blows and the long blades of grass lean to one side causing the foot trail to become somewhat obscured.

Out here the woods, what's left of it, is home to a pack a coyotes. At night if you stand in the front yard and listen in the distance up in the two hills between the train tracks and I-59 you can hear them yelp. Lonesome hungry voices crying out through the night air.

2

Buck is about 15 he has a blond mullet hanging out from under a ball cap, he's not fat and not thin, he's the sort of build that some kids his age go through before they start to get taller. He sits on the front porch of a yellow duplex. He's wearing green OP shorts and a white T,

he has just gotten home from seeing his grandmother in the nursing home. It had been a slow and uncomfortable day and now he was ready to smother it. The sky was not yet dark.

There was a friend of Bucks, named Johnny, who lived in the duplex next door with his old man who they called Doug. Doug wore baseball jerseys almost everyday. He had a few favorites one of which was his all-star couches jersey from Johnny's post season little league pitching carrier. Doug had three ferrets that slept in his dresser. Johnny had been sitting on the trunk of Dougs Dodge Mirada when Buck and his mother drove up, and was now making the turn up the foot trail leading to the porch. "what ya doing?" Buck said then took a sip from a glass of what looks like ice tea.

John smiled. He had this maniacal smile that looked like it stretched from one ear to the next. His favorite pass time was sports or telling stories of sex which he more than likely got from his dad and at other moments when he was out fucking shit up. "Got anymore fireworks?" John asked.

"What you want 'em for?"

John motioned with his head the direction from where he had walked up. "Been throwing fireworks at that damned neighbor." This neighbor didn't live in the duplexes with them, but in a small white house that was about 20 yards from the duplexes. His name was Phillip. He was a youth director at a local church, as well as the towns historian. Phillip was about 30 years-old wore pastel knit shirts and thin sweaters in the spring. He had a little dog named Titan or something completely unbecoming for a small dog. The house he lived in was complete with flowers and a rock garden, an extensively manicured lawn. A definite candidate for a gardening medal. Due to his rightfully chosen lifestyle the kids in the neighborhood thought he was gay. This left him open for constant ridicule and random attacks launched on his yard by secret underground organizations fighting for justice and the ways of 15 year old boys living in the ratty duplexes next to his place. These attacks were launched more out of boredom than from any hating of queers.

Buck and John went to the tool shed to look for more fireworks.

Outside it was getting darker. A train passed on the tracks heading south towards Birmingham. They found no fireworks. Defeat. Boredom. John talks about how he screwed some girl last summer and that he would get another piece of that ass when he went to his mothers house this summer. Buck had gone with John to his mothers house one time she said she had a movie that they could watch. (If only it had been porno it might not have singed their souls.)



This is what happened.

John has a brother with multiple sclerosis and is in a wheel chair. His name is Lance but, John and Doug call him Big L, he lives with Johns mother because Doug drinks and can't get his license back because of too many DUIs. But the legal trouble and the drinking don't bother Big L because when he is with his mother he is Lance. And Lance stays inside. He's too fragile to be outside too long. But when he is with Doug and John he is Big L and gets to sit outside, go to softball games, and listen to stories of pulling tail. Johns mother got custody because she is a good Christian lady. (She speaks in tongues.)

Johns mother had this movie she wanted them to watch. Okay. Well it was a movie about rock n roll music. Cool. Like MTV. Which both John and Joe had only seen maybe once in their lives because they had neither one ever had cable TV. The movie starts out with guitar licks then right the fuck out of no where the words "ROCK AND ROLL; THE SATANIC MESSENGER" What the fuck? This movie they were forced to watch. It scared Joe to death. He was going to hell. Angus Young is as good as the devil himself. Somehow SATAN uses Angus as a messenger. By the use of a dark magic SATAN sends messages through Angus's fingers then to the strings of the Gibson SG then incredibly the devils law surfs the sound waves to our ears there climbing inside of our souls forcing us into the will of SATAN.

Buck couldn't understand how John got any ass unless it was from his own mother.

But that was almost a year ago and the devil have his way. With nothing to do this night. Buck and John sat inside watching a healthy dose of Alf or something. While a concrete bird-feeder and some lawn chairs sat idle in the night air of Phillip's back yard. Bucks mother had a bottle of salt in the kitchen. At Johns some plastic silver wear. The two boys sat watching the tube till about 10 o'clock. Bucks mother was asleep. Next door Doug sat up drinking beers with some of his softball friends listening to a high school sports recap on the A.M. dial, and boasting about the game or the big hit and how slow the other team would round the bases. Lights out at Phillips house. Peace in the air. A smell called tranquility filled the land and the dreams of those who slept.

The next morning the sun rose on the sleepy little town. All the shops flung open their doors. The school buses pulled up and bright eye'd children filed on board, now only a few more weeks till summer vacation. John was at Bucks as usual in the morning asking for Leggo waffles. Doug never bought any food. John usually ate at his grandmothers across town. John bummed some speed stick deodorant

off Buck. Bucks mother had already left for work. She teaches classes at the local high school. Doug was still in the bed. Phillip was in his back yard pulling up plastic knives, the ones he could find, from out of his yard. There was a whole pack of 50 stuck in the ground all over his yard. He didn't bother with his bird feeder and lawn chairs that now sat out in the middle of the hay field about 100 yards away. In a couple of weeks the word FAG would appear on the salted area of the yard.

SATAN to his army: well done boyz.

### 3

Demons! Demons! There's devils in my head! No. no. Get out! Get out. Aah....back down get back down get on back down devil to your firey hole.

"Are you ok Buck?"

"Yeah mom."

"Are you sure nothing is wrong?"

"Yes mom nothing."

### 4

Buck has another friend named Cliff. Cliff was bigger than Buck and had kicked his ass a couple of times while they were younger. Still though they had road BMX together and ridden skateboards on jacked up ramps that Cliff and his dad had built next to a cow pasture in Argo about 15 miles down the road, south. These ramps had been built without plans and the shapes came from looking at a picture in a magazine that was taken at some weird angle. (Imagine one side with easy transition the other side vert. Or ramps that were built backwards like transition where there should be flat bottom and flat where there should transition. These kind looked like a wooden ditch and were fun as hell.)

Cliffs cousin does body work on cars. Today Cliff pulled up in front of the duplex driving a lowered 82 Toyota pick-up with factory rims, low profile tires, a blue paint job with thick hot pink drips running down the sides. The hood was a dull red color and rusted in spots. It was a goddamned chariot, it was. A pure, unbridled natural creature of composites and was blowing smoke out the tale pipe, and burning oil as it idled in the front yard.

Buck walked over to the truck.

"What's up C?"

"Not shit.... what ya'll up to?"

"Ain't shit to do around here either."

"Well that gets one big damn." Cliff held up a pack of smokes "you



want one?" he asked.

"Put that down my mom's home."

"Aw'ight" Cliff flipped down his sun visor and stuck the smokes in it. "Check this out" Cliff pointed to his new gear shifter "dog this here's one 'em hurst shifters. Bad ass."

"What's hurst?" Asked Buck.

"It's just the knob.... the handle on the shifter.... they make shift kits.... can't afford a whole kit....boy this thing would be bad ass with it--daaamn."

"That's cool."

"Hey want to go over to Amys with me? I'm gonna' see if she'll let me play with her tig o' bittys." Cliff smiled and leaned his head back in the seat. "I would just do it righ'cher but my cousin just hooked up these new Feira bucket seats so it's hard to get the moves on. You want to go."

"I don't know."

"Come on if she ain't there we'll cruse around town for a while."

"Alright."

Buck got in the truck. The whole time thinking 'this girl is gross' she ain't much to look at unless your trying to look around her. But for Buck it was more that he doesn't know what to do if something were to happen. What if she shows us her tits or something? Does that mean she's gonna try to kiss me? She's a skank. Cliff brags about banging her when they were out drinking with this other kid in Argo. Then the nervousness leaves and his pulse increases.

"Hey Cliff, you think she'll show us her tits!?"

"Shilit you ready ain't ya?"

## 5

This is Dougs beer time one afternoon when ferrets escaped from his house.

The door had been left open. The 3 ferrets had left their beds in the open drawers of Johnny and Doug's bedrooms and had commenced a reconnaissance mission on the duplexes. Doug didn't give a shit. He sat outside with Big L and drank his beer.

Johnny and Buck were out in the field throwing a shot-put back and forth. What a dumb piece of iron.

Brandon, a 5-year old, from the building next to Johnny walked over to where Doug sat drinking beer. Doug would always try and talk to Brandon kind of half way between trying to teach him to talk and getting a kick out of hearing Brandon try. Brandon couldn't say

anything clearly, everything sounded as though it were filtered through spit, a drunk dad, and a crazy mother. He just stood in front of Doug slobbering out incoherent sounds. The Ferrets Three running lose in the neighborhood.

Brandons mother came looking for him. He hadn't been in front of Dougs for more than a minute. She found him standing there, grabbed him up by the arm saying that those damned ferrets would rip his throat out. She cussed at Doug as she walked off pulling Brandon by his arm, he was crying. Doug smiled took a drink from his beer leaned forward nudged Big L with his elbow and said "she's a fat ho but I'd stick my dick in her." He stomped his foot and slapped his leg laughing at his disregard for her attitude.

A shot-put has a dull thud when it lands on grass, but not when it lands on glass bottles.

## 6

Last night Buck drank a few Mt. Dew's this kept him up late. So he left the duplex and walked the half-mile up to the gas station by McDonalds and the interstate. He wanted to get some cigarets from the guy who worked up there at night, he never carded anyone, but before he did he found himself sitting on the floor in front of the magazine rack. Girls, cars, radios, guns, fish, some "this is your life live it" kind of shit. Why is it that everyone reads this but not the tabloids?... Uave ayformaxne.... was what it sounded like the guy behind the counter was saying. His English wasn't good, and he seemed concerned that Joe was going to steal a magazine. Fuck it. He didn't buy a thing, left without the cigarets, and walked all the way back home. About the time he was crossing the train tracks he heard the coyotes yelping back over the hill.

I hate the world. I want to do good. I hate the world. I want to be right. Always.

When he got back to the duplex he sat down on the couch and was engulfed by the comfortable aroma of his mothers living room the sweet smell of potpourri and tables covered with tokens, small keepsakes of her life and the life of her mother. Here lately, in Bucks life he did not pay too much attention to his mother. However at this moment it hit him as if God himself had reached down and thumped him on his head. He saw his mother as a beautiful woman who would give anything to have her sons happy. He clung to this moment as if his life depended on it, and with out his mother he, in more ways than the obvious point of his birth, would not be here and quite possibly a lot worse off. But



for some reason as it is with boys of Bucks age this was not enough to calm that strange atavistic awakening that was taking place somewhere within his body. Did I use the word 'sons' a few sentences back? I'm sorry let me explain myself, Buck has a younger brother who he really doesn't know. That's about it, case and point, in a nutshell, Buck doesn't know him at all, and this creates some odd feeling of sibling rift that is not easily breached. So the mention of 'sons' was just to give you a little more insight in this small, and somewhat choppy, look at the life of Buck.

He sat there on the couch for a few minutes. Then got up walking quietly on the balls of his feet down the hallway and into his bed room where he picked up a small A.M. radio and a notebook and stepped outside. The sky was cloudy and the stars would come on go like distant light houses. It was a pleasant night out as he sat there turning the dial through empty channels of static. Only occasionally finding the broken sound of some lonely guitar or the rusty blast of a distant trumpet. Waiting for the world to come through. A stringy coyote yelps on the hill.

Night. Sitting outside a small yellow duplex on the edge of a hay field in Alabama, the lights from the kitchen and living room shine through the windows showing the silhouette of the un-cut shrubs that surround the house.

Buck was writing in the notebook.

Alright. The simple fact that I'm sitting with this notebook in my hands outside tonight is a step in the right direction.... I don't want to live forever.... no it's not immortality that I'm after. It's preservation in this here moment of my short span of life. It helps me hold on. It ain't much. But it's as much as I make it. No broken promises here. Not leaving myself out of any of the game just yet. Hell I'm just getting underway.... nope haven't even started.... it doesn't really matter, at first, as long as you pick the pen that is enough. It is possible. If I can just get some of my stuff into the right hands they'll see. They'll understand what it is I have set out to do. And the question will be asked 'what have you set out to do? Precisely? And I'll say 'I'm changing the world as you know it.' And if they laugh if they sinker I'll reach back and slap them across their silly bonbon eating faces. The fucks.

7(sometime in the future)

A hilarious yellow and orange fire blazed in the space behind Bucks eyes. He had taken to scribbling in notebooks and on this night he had borrowed his mothers car and driven down to a dinner to sit and think on paper.

Buck sat down at a table took out his notebook and a pen and started to write....

This is a game of chase. He wrote.

The true sport. The real thrill of the hunt. Got to approach the situation slowly. Creep along. Slowly. Maybe drive down to the Waffle House or if there is no Waffle House any 24-hour diner will do. Down the interstate here there is a Waffle House where a curb market used to be. Make sure that you smile at the waitress or nod your head if it's a waiter, when you walk in. They've been there longer than you. This is their turf. They make you the coffee. The cooks fry your egg, toast your bread, slice your tomato and crisp your lettuce. So show them some respect will ya'. Don't you know what a little Visine in your drink will do? Gives you the runs. You wouldn't think it, but that stuff can mess you up. So I've heard. Just a few drops of Visine.

Respect the employees.

Find a seat that suits your taste. A booth or a bar stool or something. Don't go trying to sit in a high chair, that's stupid. But really it don't matter. I have my own preference. The booth-in-the-back. The one closest to where the employees sit and smoke. It's the one that hides you but lets you see pretty much everyone that comes in and out. You can camouflage yourself. The people walking in through the door never notice the old Camelina boy in the back. They're like a deer slipping into the scope of the hunter. And remember no matter how freaky you may be, be polite and they'll be forced to be nice back, which is all you can ask. Like Jesus he was a freak, but he was nice, and see how far he got.

Buck put down his pen and ordered a coffee.

Now you just sit still in the bushes and wait.... he wrote as he was waiting on his coffee. He paused and drank in coffee listening to the chatter of the room.

He started writing again.

Look. Here listen to her....over at the table with her friends.... a distant chirping like a mockingbird in a conversation.... If you talked to her you'd swear that head was filled with barbarian cream. A raspberry glazed doughnut. This guy at the bar, his teeth look like wet asphalt and I imagine his lungs are like the Labrea tar-pits. Like Johnny Cash I'm carrying it home piece by piece just small enough to fit in a lunch box.



The biggest frustration in the world. The most love. The most comforting. Home.

I hate the guy my mom is seeing. Shetland is his name. Like a Shetland pony except he's an asshole. His whole family is fucking stupid. He tells me I don't work enough. I got a job though. I work down at a grocery store called Burton's. If you spell it backwards it says snot rub. I work in the stock room with Johnny and these two gay black guys who are scared of possums. They both swear to us that a possum will jump at you and try to attack you if givin' the chance. There some possums that live around the dumpster out by the loading dock. They're scared to take the trash out so me or John do it whenever we work, I don't mind. Shetland hates them.

## 8

Bucks mother came in his room early one morning right as the sun was up. This was unlike her especially on the weekend. The first thing she asked was "were you with Johnny last night?"

No. He hadn't been. They hadn't even been hanging out that much since they turned 16 and started driving. They'd get together sometimes with some friends, drive out to one of the dead end roads in Mr. Burks undeveloped subdivisions and drink some beer. But other than that they hadn't been hanging out that much. Why did his mother want to know? He asked her.

"Last night Johnny was in a car wreck...." she said weakly.

"What!?... "Buck raised up in his bed.

"Johnny was killed...." said his mother and then started crying. Empty. Here there is nothing.

"What happened?" Buck said over the phone to one of his friends who knew Johnny. No one knew how to explain it. Everyone cried. Buck got together with some of his friends and drank beers that night. They all got drunk. None of them were left standing.

After the funeral some stories began to pop up. The facts of the wreck were know. The truck, an 88 red and white S-10 was traveling at about 65 mph. along a stretch of Hwy 11 that has a steep drop off and a row of trees to contend with. If you were to run of the road it would be impossible to not hit one of the trees. That is what happened to them. The truck went airborne, turned sideways, and hit the tree with the top of the cab. Johnny was killed with another boy, neither one of them were driving. The driver was about 30 years old and why they were with him no one knows. The driver, he lived. And said that he wasn't driving

even though he was found locked behind the steering wheel of the S-10. Then the stories began to surface.

The word was spread that the police had said that Johnny and the other boy had been killed even before the wreck. That the wreck was a cover-up. People said that the backs of their heads had been beaten in and that there was dirt under their fingernails. There was a story telling that they were killed in a drug deal out in Argo at some trailer. That was enough for the driver after he was released on bond to have the dog shit beaten out of him on a few occasions. The other boys dad was going to kill the driver, but the police had to pay a visit to him and persuade him other wise. The Driver did less than a year in jail.

When all this happened it was unknown to Buck that this man who lived was the nephew of Shetland.

## 9

Buck, his mother and his little brother moved out of the yellow duplexes and into a house on the other side of town. Since the weak Doug had gone off drinking, disappeared from everyone. A few stories popped up saying that he had been arrested and was spending time in jail. But nothing was ever clear on the in's and out's of Doug, you just heard stories. When they moved Shetland had decided it appropriate to ask Bucks mother to marry him. I mean since she had just bought a house.... Shetland decided to move into the house and run it like it was his own. He added on to the back porch but in Bucks opinion the work was halfassed.

Buck had long since quit working at Snotrub, graduated highschool, and had taken to drinking fairly heavy. It was his age and the circumstances surrounding his life in the last year after Johnny was killed. Or maybe Buck was following in the footsteps of Doug who was one of the only male figures in his more formative years, except for Shetland, but he was a dick so who gives a fuck about him anyway. Doug didn't even like him. Buck would stay away from home as much as possible and if he was home he would lock himself up in him room and listen and CDs.

It happened one day that Shetland woke Buck up with the usual tone of "boy you need to learn!... This childishness has got to stop." He said in a whisper so Bucks mother wouldn't hear. Buck sat there wanting to rip the 38 yr. old throat out of his cocksucking live in shitass. "Go out and get some real work. Tomorrow your going get up with me and go get some fire wood off the Brukes land to sell.... or paint the damned garage." said Shetland.

The deal is Buck wouldn't mind going to work or painting that



'damned' garage, but Shetland didn't give a rip about helping Buck. He just wanted Buck to move out of the house so he could have his bedroom in the basement to convert into a TV/game room or something. Or so Buck thought. The reason he thought this was that he had overheard Shetland outside the garage say to one of his friends over a Coors light and listening to Brooks and Dunn (which is the epitome of bad country music) "yhep I think I could do some work on that bed room in the basement but,...." Then his voice had trailed off the radio covered it up. It goes without saying that buck wanted to kill him then.

Buck was wanting to leave but he didn't trust Shetland to be left alone with his mother, or his little brother whom Buck felt Shetland would try and mold into another minion of our lord asshole. Plus Buck lacked any real direction of where to go if he was to leave the house.

Then about a year after Johnny had died on one bright and shiny day Bucks mother told him that her and Shetland were getting married. They were engaged for almost two months before the wedding.

## 9 1/2

Time moved along until a week before the wedding and Buck found out that it was Shetlands Nephew who had been the driver of the car that Johnny was killed in. I can not explain to you the amount of rage and all the possibilities of ending the wedding that went through Bucks mind. Buck had, at first, out of respect for his mother asked Shetland, politely, not to have his nephew at the wedding. But Shetland said that his nephew was family and that if he wanted to come then he would. And Buck said he'd shoot him. To which Shetland laughed and walked out of the room.

On the wedding day torn between killing Shetland and his nephew Buck sat alone in his bed room. He once again talked to Shetland, who ignored him. Buck loaded his 12 gauge pump locked the door to his bedroom and sat down on the bed holding the gun in his lap.

Most of Bucks family was down for the wedding which was taking place at a neighbors house up the street. All of his family and most of the neighborhood was up at that house. Buck sat alone in his room on his bed clutching his shotgun. Maybe they caught wind that Buck was messed up or maybe they were curious about where he was because for some reason his cousin came down to the basement. When his cousin entered the room Buck was obviously losing it. He told his cousin of how he had found out about Shetlands nephew and how he tried to get Shetland to understand.

Up the street at the wedding Buck and his cousin were missing as well as the gun from the house.

To hell with Shetland.

Momma I'm gonna go  
Down the highway and  
Kill me a devil  
That lives in the ditch

## 10

Fall forward a few years. Bucks mother married Shetland. Buck is 17. He's got a car, a small 1984 Honda Accord, It's got a sunroof in it, but the glass for it didn't come with the car so there is a large hole in top. There's plastic and duct tape covering it now. Still it leaks when it rains. The radio only picks up AM and the tape deck is broken. Cliff failed the last two years he was in school, quit in the 10<sup>th</sup> grad, and moved in with some girl out side of town, towards Birmingham.

For Buck the night is a cold stoic body. The day comes to him as a starving idiot. Begging for his sleepy attention to the world he wants to leave. Only escaping for a few minutes with a daydream. Shetlands voice runs through his head "you sit around all day on your ass you ain't gonna amount to shit. Your gonna be poor boy and don't look to us for help. You ain't gonna be young forever. The's a lot longer put to being older."

On this particular day Buck got into his Honda, ripped out the plastic and tape to let in the wind and went for a drive.

He drove south on Highway 11, towards Argo. A little over a year ago Johnny had ridden in the truck with Shetlands nephew. Buck passed two white crosses that stood along the road side. They were draped in flowers. They looked so beautiful. Almost as though they were supposed to be there. So natural they stood, proud and at the same time, sad. Johnny's name was on one. A coyote lay dead a few yards down on the roadside. He drove on a little further. Another flower arrangement on the side of the road bearing the word DAD with a smaller red and pink heart standing to the side. He drove a little further his eyes fixed on the road in front of him. This boy, traveling towards a hole in time from which nothing escapes. Just up the road stood the foundation of the Rylate house. It marked the city limits of Argo.

He passed what was left of the house. A red brick chimney and red brick foundation was all that remained. Some one had hung a large banner advertising a new Bar-B-Que restaurant between two pin oak trees that stood in front of the remains of the house. He remembered the house before it burnt; it was a large southern one story home, painted white, it had a wrap around porch with a swing, a dog trot, and a cow pasture behind it. As Buck passed the house he was lost in a sort



of mental haze. He was now in Argo. Seconds before his head cleared a large black circle opened up on the road in front of him. He did not go blind, but the world for a moment turned dark.

The radio began to pick up a station. It was not one of the regular news stations. The announcer had a voice like Orson Wells reading the War of the Worlds....

We all have, at one point, had moments when we become focused, lost in the content and the function of the moment. Times of daydreams. Going to school in a drone-like state. An automaton in the office. We cease to be there. We are gone bye-bye. Out to lunch. We've flipped the sign around locked the door and gone home. It's the state where we function without knowing it.

Buck did not die his car didn't spin out to control. No more death for now. No mountains of white crosses lined up along side of the road no parade of frozen ghosts locked in your mind. For now it will not be this way. For now Buck realizes he is thirsty. He gets out of his car that is parked in the lot of Argos only gas station. He stretches and walks in to buy a coke. There is a murmur of voices that sounds like English might to a stranger of the language. It could be the voice of other customers or the attendant. Whatever it is it's not coming through. He exits the store and walks to his car. It's much later in the day, and he only slightly realizes that he has been absent for a while. He opens his door and gets in, and fumbles with the key trying to fit it in the ignition. Sitting beside him in the passenger seat is a piece of paper. And written on it, in his own hand writing, is a story of sorts. A falsified account of the demise of a family and of the apprehension of the guilty. He opens his coke takes a sip spilling some coke on his shirt. He picks up the paper takes another sip and begins to read.....

Family Bar-B-Qued alive in own home....no....

LANDOWNER BURNS HOME OF UNWANTED RESIDENTS WHILE FAMILY SLEPT AND SOLD THE MEAT AS BAR-B-QUE.

A cannibalistic urge took over the Burke family when they set fire to a families home and Bar-B-Qued them!

"Mr. Burke had joked that the only thing fit for white trash was to 'treat 'em like a bunch of hogs." Said Becky Hurst of Argo Alabama "We'd of never thought him to meat it."

As it turns out Mr. Burke had wanted to purchase the land that the Rylate house sat on, but was unable to convince the family to sell.

Knowing that there was a huge dept at the bank in the Rylate name the bank would eventually repose the land, however this could take years.

The Rylate family had some strong sons. "A bright future lay ahead for them." said a neighbor.

It is suspected that Mr. Burke wanted the lot which the Rylate house sat on for the purpose of another subdivision "Woodland Oaks."

"He wanted to use the trees in front yard for the entrance" confessed Mr. Burkes 11 yr. old daughter.

A sort of pillars of Hercules for madman's most grand delusion.

Police officials stated that Mr. Burke confessed to breaking into the Rylate house with his 13 yr.-old son and 11 yr.-old daughter. Mr. Burke hit each of the of the sleeping residents in the head with a golf club. After which his children were instructed to marinate the family with Kraft Honey glaze bar-b-q sauce.

His plan was fool proof said officials. He was to dispose of the bodies via a family bar-b-q. The missing Rylate family would then be assumed to have fled the debts which they owned. Sending the police into a hunt that would have them looking everywhere. The bank would then be forced to sell the land and Mr. Burke was first in line. Thus realizing the dream of the entrance to "Woodland Oaks."

They were finally caught when a student reported to the principal that the Burke daughter had confided in her the horrible accounts of the slaughter "It was a most sickening tale." said the principal.

He's not sure what to make of it. It not dark yet, but getting there. He turns on his headlights, opens the glove box and stuffs the paper in with there with the duct tape and a folded up piece of plastic. He starts the car pulls out of the service station and takes I-59 south away from town. The radio picks up nothing and buzzes as Buck takes a drink from the coke. He drives on listening to the empty air noise.



"Take me back down where cool water flows/let me remember the things I  
done"  
CCR

"No matter how I struggle and strive/ I'll never get out of this world  
alive"  
Hank Williams