



Collection TWO

May, 2011

The April Reader

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## *Preface:*

The April Reader is a monthly publication of poetry, prose, and other user-submitted content. Initially conceived as a successor publication to the now-defunct Zine Writers Guild, The April Reader aims to become a hub of online writing and content. Operating under the belief that the rise of the internet has allowed the written word to regain parity with mass-media and television, The April Reader hopes to serve as a launching point for the future writers of this generation.

## *Updates:*

TAR is happy to announce the arrival of a new editor for the project (“Joebob”), as well as a few new changes for issue 2 in response to issue 1 criticism-

- we have dropped our controversial anonymous crediting policy, although authors may still be anonymously credited on request
- We have added a “Printer-friendly” TAR format, which will be used for future releases
- Font has been changed
- Introduction format has been altered
- Copyright-free essay section has been substantially reduced
- Poems are no longer force centered

For the future, we will also be working on creating an .epub version of TAR to release electronically. Additionally, TAR in the future may begin running ads to support the cost of running the website. However, it is important to stress that should this step be taken the publication will always remain nonprofit and free to download. Further information on this potential change can be found in our ending comments.

Our IRC Channel:

Server: irc.freenode.net

Room: #TAR

*Our Distribution Page:*

[www.theaprilreader.org](http://www.theaprilreader.org)

Submit your writing, comments, and whatever else to:

**[theaprilreader@gmail.com](mailto:theaprilreader@gmail.com)**

## FICTION

### Autumn Redgate

*-Amelia*

Last time I ever do family a favor, I swear to god.

Right, so I need to have some actual composition, because if I don't make it out of this mess, this is going to need to be fit for publishing before those cultist toolboxes can do something to stop it. I've already had to go over this sentence three times to get the swearing out and read legibly, that's just poor form. Foulmouthed journalists stopped being cool when they made books about them, and since this is exactly what this is, I've got to distinguish myself.

As far as any of you care, my name's Autumn Redgate. I'm an investigative journalist on contract with The Philadelphia Inquisitor. This is the first lesson you learn as a professional muckraker: If you release any information people care about, someone's going to get shot because of it. Using your real name just makes it more likely to be you, which means you can't cover who got shot. And that's easy money right there. "Vicious cycle" is the daytime talk show phrase. I think. I'm lucky if I'm awake before 2:00 PM, most days. Enough about me. This is the story that's going to sell my biography. If I keep talking about myself and not the story, I may as well be writing it myself

I woke up in the early afternoon, the usual time for me, in my crappy Center City apartment; as usual. Not as usual, I woke up to the crash of shattered glass, courtesy of my father throwing a brick through my window. Evidently, I slept through his first five e-mails, phone calls, voice mails, and angry notes pasted to my door. This was right after I wrote my expose on police brutality, and I was stupid enough to run a red light. Being tased and beaten senseless with your own taillight to a chorus of "Next time, you don't walk home!" takes a lot out of you. Unfortunately, Dad wasn't in a mood to give up quite so easily, and the next course of action was, obviously, vandalism. I never said the man was subtle.

I snapped my eyes open and promptly fell out of the bed onto a coffee stained carpet floor. Not because I was caught by surprise, that's just how I liked to wake myself up. When I realized what happened, I grabbed for my phone, trying to work through who would think this was a good idea. If it were the police, they'd just break the door down, and I hadn't offended any of the local criminals in recent memory, which leaves my friends. My beloved father saved me the trouble of having to figure out who the offender is by leaning on the window and making some bizarre yelping noise to get my attention.

"Oi, miss too-good-to-write-a-letter! Wake up, y'lazy dockrat!" If you can place Papa Redgate's accent, you deserve a cash prize. He claims to be Russian, but it sounds like a drunken mixture of cockney, Boston, and New Jersey broiled in Texas sauce over an Australian flame. I smacked my glasses onto my face and stared out the newly-broken first story window.

"I don't think I even have a mailbox anymore. Hi, Dad." I pulled a worn military jacket over my tanktop and found some jeans that maybe could use a few rounds with a pressure washer, and asked for a minute using a finger other than my index. Dad's jaw dropped and he was at a loss for words. He was blindsided by with the unexpected profanity long enough for me to slip off for a dustpan and brush for the broken glass, then have a proper journalist's breakfast (an energy shot and a smack to the face).

It didn't take Dad long to recover, but the kitchen and dining room are in the sort of main part of my apartment, which is to say the only part of it that's not my bedroom or the bathroom, and takes up most of my living space. The point I'm trying to make is It's a ways down the hall, so while I could still hear dad clearly, it was dulled enough that I could ignore him until I was good and ready. To my surprise, I came back to find he hadn't said 'screw it and left. As we spoke, I cleaned up the glass to dump it into my bedroom trashcan

"What do you need now? If you wanted money, you wouldn't have broken my window."

"Ah, yer ma' and me lived without a roof before we had you! That's

not what I need, anyway. It's yer sister. I think she might be in trouble." That was new information. I hadn't heard from Emily in six years; I understood that we were happy to keep it that way. She'd gone to some kind of Seminary to my best recollection

"What did she do now? Get wasted on Communion wine and crash a hearse?" That wasn't my best comeback ever, but screw you, I was tired. My younger sister and I didn't have the best time growing up, and dealt with it in different ways. In entirely opposite directions, too.

"Naw, worse'n that. She didn't come to Sunday dinner. I want ya to find 'er for me." I covered my face and braced for even more ridiculous leaps in logic.

"Objection one: I'm a reporter, not a detective."

"Same damn job! Just you don't get paid as well!"

"Objection two: Shut up. Objection three: How do you get 'missing' from 'no dinner'? I know you're close, but," I didn't actually have an end to that sentence; I was banking on him to interrupt me. There was enough of an awkward silence to make me look up, and for the first time in my life, he looked seriously worried.

"Look, kiddo. I didn't want ta say anythin', but we haven't been talkin' in a shark's age. Em'ly said somethin' about new friends taking her to a new church, and I got a letter from the seminary sayin' she hadn't been to class in a long time. I thought ah could handle it, but I'm no good at none a' this thinkin' crap. 'M just a dumb ol' truck driver. Can ya do this? For yer old man?" Hell, she might actually be in trouble

"...Sure. I can't promise it'll be soon; I'm not getting paid, but I'll see what I can find out. Where was she the last time you heard from her?"

Dad practically started jumping down, and wiped some glass

off the windowsill with his jacket sleeve. Once you do what Dad wants, he's like a kid on his birthday. "Oh, thank ya! I'll send a guy to fix yer window. Don't ask too many questions where it's from." I wasn't sure glass could fall off a truck, but knowing Dad, that was a reasonable guess. "She was upstate, near Clarke's Peak. I think she said her friends were Adam and Lily. Brother an' sister around her age. If I think of anythin' else, I'll send ya a text! I got meself a Smartphone!" He looked very proud of himself, and waved back to his car laughing happily. "Look out, ya weirdos! Autumn Redgate's on the case!"

A shower and a proper change of clothes later, I got to work.

\*\*\*

Maybe finding Emily won't be as easy as I thought. The "investigative" part of my job title had gotten remarkably easier than it would have been even ten years ago, thanks to the wonderful magic of Facebook and Twitter. Everything you could possibly want to know about someone is online, if you ask the right people. Only problem is now you don't get the fun of writing "bribe money" off as a business expense. I might get lucky with this investigation though.

The fact is, there is nobody named Adam or Lily with the same last name -or- in their twenties at all in Clarke's Peak or the surrounding areas. No social network posts or profiles, no name in the yellow pages, hell, there's no gossip, parties, or -anything- in the entire town. Even Google comes up with no results besides the town's website and some story about a chemical truck going missing a few miles out of town. This means someone's scrubbed anything incriminating clean, and there are only two groups that can even afford to be this expansive: Hackers in masks from anarchist propaganda comics, and cults. Combine that with Emily going to a new church, and things narrow down quick.

Believe it or not, this is actually great news. I can't go to the police anymore, but neither can whoever's behind whatever's happening. Lawyers, maybe, but not the actual cops; narrows the playing field. Besides that, I can dedicate some actual time to this, because everyone loves a good cult story. Especially my editor. You walk in with an expose

on how some local celebrities are worshiping a space marshmallow from the planet Akara, and he looks like a single thirty-year old on Ladies' Night. So after about ten minutes of looking for my phone which I -just had- what the hell, I get Rick on the phone.

"I've got good news for once!"

"No you don't, you're about to sell me more garbage and hope I'm desperate." His voice is gruff and craggy, the end result of about a hundred cigars and cheap drinks too many. I'd like to tell you that Rick's a great man, a proper father figure, and that he always has my back - but then I would be lying. Rick Graves is an irrefutable bastard, constantly pissed off, and ready to murder anyone that gives him anything short of Hemingway crossed with Anderson Cooper. Thankfully, he's also a terrible judge of quality and I'm on contract, so he can't always say no, especially when I come in close on deadlines.

"Something weird's going on upstate. Entire town with nothing going on in it, and multiple sources bringing up a creepy church. I think there's a story here." I lied through my teeth. The wonders of video chat continue to escape him, though, so he'll never see my godawful poker face until the ink is dry.

"No there isn't." Okay, well I tried. "But you're on contract and I've got nothing better. You'd better hope you'll find something. Get up there, find what's going on, and write about whatever's there; I need something that aint' a city piece and I don't give a shit what. You're due in a week. Eight thousand words. Don't let me down." My face lit up immediately and I rushed through agreements and promises I had no intention of fulfilling as I scrambled for the shower, threw the phone in another pile of clothes, and got ready for a long car ride.

That's not what I got. Immediately before the on-ramp to the interstate, the now-familiar wail of police sirens blared over my

radio. Not a patrol car, which means no cameras to keep the driver legit. That's never a good sign. After a momentary spew of interesting language, I pulled over, checked my seat-belt, turned the radio off, and prepared for another beating. What I got was almost as bad; An older guy in a brown suit that barely fit him with an FBI badge hanging out of his breast pocket like a detective's.

"Agent Masters." I said through gritted teeth. If there's one law enforcement official that might not execute me on-sight, it's Agent Luke Masters, the FBI agent assigned to look into my...Interesting accusations towards the City of Philadelphia Police Department. He might be more legit than any civil servants from around here; the only problem is, he's still a cop at heart. Making him do his job in this case was like forcing him to arrest his brothers, and there's no love lost between us.

"Autumn fuckin' Redgate." He glared down at me behind sunglasses and sort of grunted, as if looking at me was more of an effort than he deserved. "What the hell are you up to tonight? Any more plans to embarrass the hell out of us?" About three months ago, I caught some patrol cops talking about how a local crime outfit was paying the police department to look the other way on them and come down hard on a rival gang. Not everyone's gotten over how bad it made them look

"Not on the books. Just heading out to check on my sister, I guess she's missing. I'm sure she just lost her phone." No point lying to him. The guy hates me as much as everyone else; he just doesn't use it as an excuse to give me a hard time. I didn't need to make one for him by lying.

"No shit?" Interesting. That struck our friend here in a way he tried to hide. Too bad for him I don't fall for that. He almost stopped leaning on my window, relieving me of concerns that he might tip the car over. He's a big guy, and my car is very, very old. Masters didn't seem to notice me catching him, and headed back to the car with a one-finger salute. "Don't get in our shit this time." If it were anyone else, that wouldn't have sounded anywhere near as much as a threat, but he let me go, so I dropped it.

The rest of the trip to Clarke's Peak was long and boring. 1993

Neons don't exactly come standard with a CD player or MP3 plug, so I was stuck with whatever top 40 station I could find. Between Philadelphia and far upstate, that's not much of anything. For about half an hour through this little town I got this cool electronica station, but it faded in favor of more country-pop the second I passed into more boring flyover country. I didn't have much in way of a plan, so once I reached the place, my first order of business was to find a bar and either get in a fight or wait for something interesting to happen, a strategy which served me surprisingly well in the past.

This is where the trouble started. There wasn't a single place of the sort in Clarke's Peak. This wasn't a city by any means, but it's big enough. If a place this size doesn't have somewhere folks with soul-crushing blue-collar jobs can't get boozed up and watch the game, something's gone terribly wrong.

In fact...There's nothing here worth writing about. No malls, no movie theaters, hell, even the Wal-Mart is drastically undersized. . All that occurred to me at the time was "Darn. I have five days less of dicking around than I thought" My next stop was the church, and it was THE Church. The radio had been blabbering about it nonstop since I got a mile away from Clarke's Peak. I'd had its location memorized; #1 Glory Lane. You know those office complexes that have a specially named road where they're the only building on it? It's like that.

It's a big enough place; Maybe the size of a high school, plus about ten or twelve stories. On the front we have a stained-glass cross bent diagonally and crossed two more times, with seven eyes behind it. I didn't see the point of the eyes. That's just -screaming- "We are the bad guys; we can't wait for some plucky journalist with a tongue of acid and a heart of gold to ruin our day!"

And I hate to disappoint my fans.

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## Blueberry Girl

-Some Pervert

*Editors Note: This piece contains mature subject matter suitable for an adult audience. Viewer discretion is advised.*

Sarah sighed, and dropped the last of the bloated, blue lab-rat corpses into the biohazard bin. She peeled away her purple nitrile lab gloves in the prescribed manner - the first taken off halfway, and then used to grip the second, careful not to let any part of her skin come into contact with their surfaces. She spent a minute thoroughly cleansing her hands with bactericidal soap, and then hung her lab-coat on a rack by the door, and dropped her safety goggles into a plastic receptacle alongside it.

She was glad of the chance to finally take a break. Perhaps it would give her a chance to clear her mind, and figure out why the research was going so badly. Every test organism she'd tried so far seemed to reject the retrovirus she was studying, which was an unexpected offshoot from other work in the agricultural sciences center. An exogenous virus had gotten into their experiment, and sequencing its genome revealed that it had effortlessly assimilated the DNA for all the novel growth factors that the center was working with. They had delegated the task of investigating the novel virus's capabilities to Sarah, with the promise of lucrative gains on her part if she was successful.

She wandered down to the department cafeteria. It was deserted this late at night, illuminated only by the interior lights of the vending machines along the far wall, and the green glow of fire-exit signs. One of the machines regurgitated a frothy stream of hot chocolate beverage into a plastic cup for her, and she sat with her drink at the end of a long dining table. She took a sip from the cup, and her tongue immediately went numb from the scalding hot liquid.

Sarah set it aside to cool, and checked her phone, although she knew there wouldn't be any messages. She scrolled through her contact list aimlessly, and had an idea about where she might find her next test

subject...

In a dormitory the other side of the campus, Lily finished arranging her laptop screen at the correct angle, and loaded up the next episode of the show she had been watching. She dived back into her bed, gathering the snug nest of duvet and blankets around her, and gazed intently at the screen. She had been born too early to see Cosmos the first time round, and had been completely enthralled by the first clip of the show she had seen on YouTube. After that, she had wasted no time in downloading the entire series. A ludicrous grin appeared on her face as she listened to the soothing cadence of Carl Sagan's voice, talking earnestly about billions and billions of something-or-other.

She lay back in her pile of duvet, hugging her knees to her chest. Ten minutes in to the show, and she could no longer ignore the lascivious urges she was feeling from listening to the narration. She was becoming all hot and bothered. She parted her legs just a little, and slid her hand between her thighs. Lily shut her eyes, and sank backwards into the bed covers, thighs squirming either side of her hand as she whispered to herself.

"Oh, doctor Sagan..."

She gave a surprised yelp as her mobile phone vibrated loudly against her bedside table. She dived across the bed, wondering who on earth would be calling her so late. The phone's display informed her that Sarah, her room-mate, was responsible. What could she want at this hour? As far as Lily knew, the other girl spent most of her evenings in the biochemistry department.

"Hey Sarah, what's up?"

"Lily... you, uh, you like science and things, right?"

"Sure." It was true. If Lily wasn't doing work directly related to her degree, she was usually reading Physics World, or getting lost following citations of citations from academic papers.



"Do you think you could help me with an experiment?" Sarah asked.

"Now? But it's almost midnight!"

"Yeah, I know, it's..." there was a pause, "it's the only time I could use the equipment. Yeah. Come on," said Sarah, "it'll be fun. I promise."

"Oh, all right. This experiment had better be interesting," she said.

"It will be," said Sarah. "I'll meet you at the south entrance and let you in. See you in ten."

"Sure," said Lily. "See ya."

She jumped off the bed, and removed her pajamas. Lily spent a few minutes hunting around the sea of clothes on the floor for the garments she had been wearing that day: thick, white socks, and a pair of white cotton panties. She pulled them on before stepping into a pair of comfortably-worn jeans, and slipped her bra over her modestly-sized breasts. It had been pretty warm lately, and she figured she could get away with just wearing her t-shirt. It was oversized, and had the logo of some sports brand printed across the chest. She gathered the rest of her things, put on a pair of worn sneakers, and left the dormitory to start on the short walk over to Sarah's department.

Lily's judgment of the temperature had been slightly optimistic. She arrived at the biochemistry department with her arms folded across her chest, shivering slightly. Sarah unlocked the door from the other side, and Lily hurried into the foyer. The building seemed eerie outside of working hours, all dark and quiet. The wide-screen TV mounted on the wall paraded PowerPoint slides of the department's current research, intended to impress visitors. She just caught sight of the image of a smiling girl holding a blueberry the size of a basketball, and then the presentation cycled over to the next screen, something about protein folding studies. Sarah opened another door, which chirped electronically as it recognized her electronic ID card. She held it open for Lily.

"Shall we...?"

She followed Sarah down two flights of stairs to the basement level. She had never spent much time in this department, and was already feeling lost as they made their way into the corridors. The lower floors were spartan, with concrete block walls covered with a thick layer of cream-colored paint. The wooden floor and lower parts of the walls were scuffed from the passage of equipment trolleys. They passed by a set of glass windows, stretching the entire height of the corridor, and Lily could see rows of bushy plants the other side of the glass, growing in hydroponic beds. Several of them bore large, blue fruits.

"What exactly is this experiment, anyway?" she asked.

"Wait and see," said Sarah. "It's a surprise."

Sarah brought her to a room at the end of a corridor filled with stray pieces of equipment: vacuum pumps and boxes of dusty glassware. She held the door open, and Lily stepped inside. The room was obviously in a state of disuse. Several objects sat in one corner, concealed beneath a dust sheet. A single fluorescent strip flickered on the ceiling, making an annoying buzzing noise. There was a large bed in the room's center, covered with a single blue sheet, but otherwise devoid of bedding.

"Have a seat," said Sarah.

Lily perched on the end of the bed uncertainly.

"What are we gonna do on the bed?" she asked.

"Just lie down, and relax. Oh, you might want to lose the jeans."

Sarah, I'm really not sure..."

"Trust me," she said. "And come on, it's not like I haven't

seen you undressed before now."

Lily assented, and kicked off her shoes before pulling her jeans down and folding them in a bundle on the floor. She lay back on the bed as instructed, staring at the light on the ceiling. There was a rustling noise from the foot of the bed, and she felt something tightening around her ankle. Lily propped herself up on her elbows to see that Sarah was fastening some sort of cuff around her leg - a thick, leather band tethered to the bed's corner with a length of rope.

"Is that really necessary?" she asked.

"I'm afraid so," said Sarah. She finished binding Lily's ankles to the bed frame and then crawled on to the mattress, straddling Lily and grabbing one of her wrists. She leaned forward. Lily could feel the girl's breasts pressing against her own. She was practically lying on top of her.

"Getting a little close, aren't you?" she said. She laughed nervously.

"Just give me a second," said Sarah.

Lily's arms were soon restrained in the same manner as her legs. She lay supine on the bed, limbs splayed outwards.

"What now?" she asked.

"You're asking too many questions," said Sarah. "Here, open your mouth." She pulled something from inside her lab coat.

"What is that thing?"

"It's a ball gag," said Sarah. "Now open up."

"Sarah, I really don't think that-"

She was cut short as Sarah shoved the gag into her mouth, securing the strap tightly behind the back of her neck. Lily wiggled her jaw as she strained to accommodate the rubber ball wedged between her teeth.

"Mmph."

"That's better," said Sarah.

Lily strained her arms and legs against her bonds. It was useless. She was thoroughly secured to the bed. She didn't like where this was going. She tried asking Sarah to let her go, but her gag reduced her words to unintelligible sounds.

"What?" said Sarah. "Didn't quite catch that." She sat down on the side of the bed, placing a hand on Lily's thigh.

"Mmh. Nnn!" Lily gave up trying to form words, and settled for regarding Sarah with what she hoped was a suitably pleading expression.

"Aww, look at you," said Sarah, "all tied up and helpless. I could do whatever I wanted with you, couldn't I?"

"Mmph!"

Sarah slid her hand beneath Lily's t-shirt, reaching up to squeeze lightly at one of her tits. Her other hand was making its way further up the inside of Lily's thigh, and then she felt her fingers slip inside her panties. Lily could feel her face flushing red as the girl gently stroked her fingers back and forth.

"Wait, we're getting distracted," said Sarah. She removed her hand from between Lily's legs, and stood up. She fished around in the pocket of her lab coat, and pulled out a syringe filled with clear liquid. She removed a disposable needle from its sterile wrapping, and attached it to the syringe barrel, holding it upright and flicking it to dislodge stray air bubbles. A little jet of liquid squirted from the needle's tip.

Sarah rubbed one of Lily's arms, looking for a vein. Lily was making desperate whimpering noises through her gag, and her legs were quivering as they strained against the restraints. She was

shaking her head.

"Oh, that's right," said Sarah, "I forgot you don't like needles." Lily nodded frantically.

"All right. Well, there are other ways. As long as it gets into your bloodstream somehow."

She re-capped the needle, and placed a reassuring hand on Lily's cheek. She frowned, and drew her fingers away.

"Is that a little drool, Lily?"

Lily shrugged as much as she was able to. The gag in her mouth was making it difficult to swallow. She could feel a wet trail from the corner of her lip where her saliva was trickling out.

Sarah left the door propped open while she rummaged around in one of the boxes in the corridor. There was silence as she disappeared for a minute, and then she returned, carrying several more pieces of equipment in her arms. Among other things, she had brought a large beaker filled with half a litre of water. She squirted the contents of the syringe into it, and swirled the liquid for a minute to make sure it was well mixed. Once she was satisfied, she drew the solution up into another, very large syringe with a blunt, angled nozzle. She scooped a wad of Vaseline from a tub, and used it to grease the syringe's tip.

She clambered up onto the bed. She pulled Lily's panties away to one side, and then Lily felt the tip of the syringe nuzzling against her anus.

"As long as it gets inside you somehow, it's fine," said Sarah.

Lily screwed her eyes shut as she felt the syringe push its way into her butt hole. Her anus tensed around it, as if trying to expel the unwelcome intrusion. As Sarah depressed the plunger, the liquid began to creep inside. The experience was remarkably uncomfortable. Lily was thrashing her head from side to side, although she kept her legs very still for fear of the consequences of sudden movement with the syringe wedged inside her. She gasped and groaned as the flow continued, pushing further

and further into her bowels.

Sarah emptied the syringe to the point that she could continue dispensing it with one hand, and used her other to rub Lily's tummy, which was feeling horribly bloated. Twinges of cramp were surging through her intestines in spasms. Her t-shirt clung to her, moistened by her cold sweat. Finally, the flow of the liquid ceased.

"You're going to need to hold it in once I take the syringe away," said Sarah. "Otherwise things are going to get really messy. Can you do that for me, Lily?"

Lily nodded. Although the feeling of all the water inside her was horrible, she figured that the consequences of voiding herself onto the bed would be even worse. The syringe was pulled free with a wet sound, and Lily's buttocks quivered as her muscles tensed. There was a gurgling sound from her stomach.

"Good girl," said Lily. "You just hold that inside, now. I'm not sure how long it will take for the virus to penetrate through."

"Mmhiuh!?"

"Oh, that's right, I never actually told you," said Sarah. "Well there's nothing you can do about it now, my little lab-rat. Just try to keep calm. I'll be documenting everything."

Sarah fussed around in the corner of the room, setting a camera up on a tripod and angling it to face the bed. Lily lay there, trying not to contemplate her straining ass hole and churning bowels. There was a weird, prickly feeling starting to spread throughout her abdomen. She strained her neck to look down at her body, and saw that her stomach had become visibly bloated. Her skin also appeared to be turning blue...

Several blotchy marks had appeared on Lily's belly, like big, blue bruises. Her stomach made another loud gurgling noise and bulged outwards a few inches, its surface continuing to change color as the dark patches spread across her skin. There was a strange

tingling sensation in her breasts, and Lily looked down to see a pair of wet, purple stains on the front of her t-shirt. Her bra strap was digging in to her uncomfortably, pulled tight by her swollen boobs.

"Nnnh!" she pleaded. She looked over at Sarah, who was standing alongside the camera tripod, looking at its fold-out screen and ensuring every detail was captured on the video. Her lower lip was curled under her teeth.

Lily made another, more insistent noise, and felt her cheeks ballooning outwards. She couldn't see beyond her navel now, the rest of her belly was concealed behind the curves of her swollen body. Her t-shirt had ridden right up to the top of her chest, and was pulled taut across her collarbones. Her bra finally gave under the strain, bursting apart and freeing her swelling boobs, which were drooping under their own weight. Her nipples had puffed up and turned a dark shade of violet, and some kind of opaque purple secretion was oozing from them constantly.

Her cheeks puffed out even more, and she made a strangled choking sound as the gag slipped further back into her mouth. Sarah came over to her and unfastened its strap, allowing Lily to push it out with her tongue. She clenched her teeth, glad to be rid of it and finally having the chance to relax her aching jaw muscles. Something shifted around inside her, and she let out a long belch.

"Oh god, Sarah," she said, "what's happening to me?"

"I'm not entirely sure," she said. "The reaction hasn't been this fast with any other of my test organisms. Or so extreme," she added, reaching her arm over the top of Lily's huge belly. She rubbed the straining skin with her hand and giggled to herself. "Look at you," she said, "all swollen up. And such a lovely color, too."

The ropes holding Lily's restraining cuffs creaked. The color was creeping along her arms now. Her veins darkened beneath her skin, followed a few inches behind by the advance of the deep blue color spreading across her like spilled ink. Her fingers had puffed up into chubby, sausage-like appendages, and she was hardly able to clench her

fists any more as she moaned desperately.

"Please," said Lily, "turn me back! There's so much pressure!"

"Turn you back? Why ever would I want to do that?" said Sarah, prodding the side of Lily's gigantic tummy. She rocked slightly from side to side.

"I can't hold it..." said Lily. She blinked a few tears from her eyes, and from the way her vision was tinted by them she guessed that they, too, had been colored by the transformation. Her panties yielded with a snapping sound, and she sighed as her big, round belly flopped down, finally released from the restriction. She couldn't lift her head at all anymore; she was weighed down by her tumescent breasts. Her belly felt like it was six feet across.

Lily became aware of a warm, wet feeling between her legs and the bed covers. With more urgent things occupying her mind, she had inadvertently allowed her bowels to relax. Thick, purple slime squirted from her ass hole in a sudden jet, forming a triangular stain on the bed sheet. It mingled with a thinner, inky fluid as she completely lost control of her bodily functions while letting out a sad whimper. She tugged weakly at her cuffs, and the bed frame creaked around her.

"Oh dear," said Sarah. "Well, at least you held it in for long enough for the effects to take hold. What a mess, though. Can't you even control your own body any more?"

Lily let out a sob as she shook her head.

"It looks like you're completely at my mercy," said Sarah.

"Anyway, try to lie still while I collect some samples."

Lily was powerless to resist as Sarah rolled her this way and that, poking and prodding her huge body. She rocked back and forth

on engorged buttocks the size of pillows as more purple tears ran down her cheeks. There was a twinge of pain as Sarah held a glass vial beneath Lily's breast and squeezed, causing it to squirt a jet of purple, milky fluid into the container. She carefully screwed on the cap, and set it aside.

"That'll be interesting to analyze," she said. "Now, I suppose I should collect some of the rest of your secretions..."

Lily felt herself prodded in quite sensitive places as Sarah gathered samples of the thick fluids which were still oozing between her thighs. She held another vial up to Lily's face before grabbing a fistful of the soft flesh of her boobs, twisting suddenly and making Lily cry out in pain. The sharp squeeze brought forth another gout of purple milk, which fountained into the air and rained down on top of both of the girls. She collected a few of Lily's tears in the vial, before placing it alongside the others and labeling it with a marker pen.

"Why?" Lily sobbed. "Why are you doing this?"

Sarah shrugged. "Science, I guess. Collecting data, and all that." There was a wet, rasping sound as Lily's body tried to vent some of the pressure. A moment later, the room filled with the aroma of freshly-baked blueberry pie. She let out another helpless whimper.

"You've done well," said Sarah. "I'm sure my sponsors will be impressed with these results. Now you just stay lying here, and I'll see about moving you somewhere else. I'm not sure how I'll fit you through the door, though."

"No," cried Lily, "please! Don't leave! I..."

"What?" said Sarah.

There were ominous creaking sounds from Lily's belly, which was fully eight feet in diameter now, with her legs sticking out below it and waving around in the air. Her boobs threatened to engulf her face as they quivered and bounced. Lily opened her mouth to speak, but the words only came out as a whisper.

"I think I'm going to..."

With a sudden surge, her body bulged outwards. The globe of her belly rippled and throbbed as a final change in pressure forced her into an almost perfectly spherical shape. Her boobs flattened with the curvature, spread out and subsumed into her body's huge, rotund shape. The restraints burst from around her arms and legs, torn apart by the pressure of her engorged flesh. As she ballooned up even further, her limbs looked like they were retreating inside her. They were only just visible as comparatively tiny hands and feet, set in dimples on the surface of her enormous, round body.

Sarah took a step back as the immense, round girl started to roll sideways. Her head, with its disheveled mess of violet hair, looked as if it was about to recede entirely into her globular body. She could just make out Lily's final words as she rolled off the edge of the bed.

"Help me..."

She landed on the floor. The drop was only a couple of feet, but given the fragile state of her taut, bulging body, it was more than enough. Her belly flattened against the floor as it deformed, and then there was a loud, wet sound as her spherical body finally gave way. Lily exploded outwards, throwing syrupy strands of thick purple slime in all directions. Sarah only managed to get her hands half way to her face before she was doused in a wave of goop. She was knocked off her feet by the force of the impact, and fell onto her butt, sprawling back across the floor in a torrent of violet ooze. Her ears were ringing from the explosion, and it was all she could do to lie there for about half a minute, stunned. She finally managed to come to her senses, and wiped the worst of the slime from her face, blinking it out of her eyes. She spat out the material that had found its way into her mouth.

Whilst the source of the liquid was a little disturbing, it was quite delicious.

Sarah stood up to survey the destruction. There wasn't a single surface in the room that had escaped the blast of purple viscera, and she swore under her breath as she saw a thin wisp of smoke rising from the video camera, its warranty thoroughly voided. At least she had the samples, though. She would be able to have a look at them, once she'd cleaned up this mess. It looked like it was going to take quite a while.

Something caught her eye among the glistening, slimy destruction. A more solid lump, with a matted tangle of hair. She realized that it was Lily's head, still trailing a little segment of spinal cord. She picked it up, and laughed as she saw the expression of complete helplessness that was permanently frozen on Lily's face. Sarah found another large beaker in the corridor outside, and placed the head inside it. She turned back to the room, and wondered how on earth she was going to clean up the mess.

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Six hours later, Sarah sighed in contentment as she sat down outside the room, wearing only a lab coat. Her clothes had been ruined, and she had had to incinerate them along with most of the stuff from the room, before cleaning herself off using one of the emergency chemical showers. Fortunately, the department contained enough industrial-grade solvents and bleaches to clean up the scene reasonably well, although the walls still bore a slight blue color. Nobody seemed to use the room, anyway. The stains would go unnoticed.

She held the beaker up in front of her, and Lily's head shifted slightly within it. Sarah had plans for making a memento of the occasion. It would be nice to have something to remember the day by.

There were other things to take care of first, though. After double-checking the department for any remaining signs of what had transpired there, Sarah slinked out of a side entrance into the cold, bluish light of early morning, the head concealed in her rucksack, wrapped in layers of paper towels. She got it back to the dormitory without any trouble - in fact, she saw one of her friends out for an early morning jog, and managed to make small talk for five minutes without anything seeming out of place.

She entered her dorm room, seeing the mess of duvets on Lily's bed and her laptop facing it, with an image frozen on the screen. She closed the media player, and clenched her fist triumphantly as she saw the webmail window behind it, still logged in to Lily's account. She wrote a message to Lily's parents, telling them that she was sorry for the short notice, but she was traveling to Brazil as an unexpected part of her studies, and that she wasn't sure whether she would be able to get internet access while she was away. She brought up a search engine in a new window, and set about looking for ways to clean bones.

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Sarah's patience was tested over the following month. It had turned out that the best way to clean Lily's skull after removing the skin was to allow nature to run its course, and allow beetles to clean away the dead tissue. With a few careful inquiries around the zoology department, Sarah managed to acquire a number of Dermestidae beetles. She placed them, along with the skull, in a box concealed among the bushes by the stream at the campus's edge. She checked on it every day, and was delighted when the beetles had moved on after four weeks, having picked the skull clean.

After a quick bath in hydrogen peroxide, the skull was clean, white, and beautiful. Sarah was aware that it might seem suspicious to other people, and the questioning by the campus security and police during the last month had her slightly on edge. Nobody had yet found an explanation for Lily's disappearance, and it was difficult to go one day on campus without hearing somebody mention it. As a potential piece of evidence, she decided that it was best kept concealed.

One time, she set the skull at the foot of her bed, and masturbated while gazing into its hollow eye sockets. That had made her feel a bit weird. After that, she was content to keep the skull concealed above a ceiling tile, taking it down every so often to admire it. She wondered whether they'd assign her a new roommate...

## Bored out of my Mind in PSYC305

-Tai

I listen to a lady prattle on about babies and their deformities and other things which make the world not so bright a place. As her mouth opens all I can think of is the time we drank at a bar or sipped tea – I forget – she confessed she was barren, she'd never bread, but career came first and now she regrets. I told her it'll be all right, there's more to the world and worst comes to worst you can just adopt some kid from Africa, he'll love it I'm sure. It's not the same she said, so I told her it's not, it's better. But I was lying and she's studied people so she knows it too, but she puts on the social face. She probably cried later that night looking at baby pictures and piss tests screaming no.

There's a jock of all things, the guy's not so bad, and when he opens his mouth it's not bad it's awkward, but it's OK cause he's hot. And psychology teaches me that life is buffet for people with looks so I guess I better work on my personality. But he's an alright guy, I saw him working out once. He did well. I was a little jealous as I lifted 12 pound dumbbells and puffed gave up went home for a drink.

There's a girl to my left, she's a pretty face and nothing else. Most people don't even have the face though I suppose. When I first met her I thought, this is the one, but then she opened her mouth and my mental boner shriveled up and died. So it goes. So I told her lets be friends, she agreed that was for the best, fondling a cross round her neck and I thought oh no not another, Don't invite me to a god damned meeting of freaks, I won't do it, Last time like everyone else I sat through a sermon, an altar boy under the podium sucking off the priest, and that, not the word of god, was driving the holy man as he screamed hail Hitler in Jewish to his flock fleeced sheep stock.

She seems nice, but they always are, but then “come talk bible with friends” while you picture a bullet through the brain because how can you say no without insulting the Lord the savior or FSM or some other

imaginary friend come guy that'll fuck you in the ass if you say no so don't.

Psychology taught me or was it Gandhi who said that perspective is king of woe, so understand the killer and you'll watch the world burn, hell, I don't even understand her but I agree at times, like when I watched a mother push in front of a line while a cripple in a chair just wheeled behind and couldn't do shit because if he tried she'd knee him in the face and claim something 'bout the sanctity of the child.

Children children children, so innocent, But apparently not, according to psyc, Can do much more than we give them credit for, like tie their shoes and breathe and do taxes, but still they're sacred for some reason.

Anyway. Psychology. There's a lot of girls by the way. It's 10 percent guys so it's a good place to go if you're sick of your computer science or engineering science major or something else devoid of nice smelling hair. So this other girl, she's homely but she's a laugh and a half and she's a real catch so if someone else wants her take her, because I sure don't, And I know it's mean and we should look to personality but that's something ugly people tell you because they're trying to trick you into love.

Psychology tells me what love is, it's a fundamental emotion which drives us closer to others. All part of Bowlby's great big plan for the world where we attach to our mothers and if she leaves we cry, and if we don't we're deficient because apparently not depending on someone who's a bitch is pathologically wrong. Not my concern though because my mother's a saint, and so is yours I presume.

There's another who interjects her opinion and says Skinner was wrong and we humans are not driven by rewards but by something deeper and correlation doesn't equal causation and this study could use a larger sample or more people if you want to be humane. Meanwhile we all just want to get out so we can have lunch and fuck if it's late at night.

So I watch the clock and day dream of face fucking the bitch out of her, and I give her one for the cheering class, and the teacher takes pictures with her cellular phone which she'll send to her barren lady friends, and they'll laugh about it over margaritas at some late night bar dance club as they go out in packs claiming to be cougars but really hyenas looking for scraps of meat and semen on the off-chance that doctor don't want number was lying to them as some sort of cruel fuckin' joke.

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## Concert

*-Nurse*

You're late! Go, if you hurry you might make it in time for your premiere, lord your own premiere, how is it that you can be late for your own premiere! For what reason have you been practicing this whole time, where will all the countless hours at your little keys flow away if you miss today, this important day! Your whole life, you were born to play, touched on the head with a talent beyond gift, your whole life will simply melt away if not for today!

I will be there, expecting a performance, and your parents too will be there and your teachers, oh they will have expectations as well. Why, everyone you have ever known will be there to see you play, everyone even whose faces might not be familiar but knows yours well, sitting in anticipation. They will be strangers to you no longer, either, as intimate relatives they will become moved as they will be by your stunning performance. Yet look at you, a sloth might envy your inaction though he would feel embarrassed for your lack of enthusiasm!

Run run, run, if you hurry you just might make it in time to wash the oil from your face. If you hurry maybe they won't murmur so much about the ill-mannered child who insists on overstating his position, does he really think a bit of music warrants a theft of my time, is what they will say, without a doubt! Don't be a fool, here is your chance, your one chance! You are the best, indeed your mastery is unmatched even against the magicians of history but how trivial, your whole life was spent in this

silly little pass-time, and you are late? You are late!

Do you think their patience for your novelty runs any deeper than even the film of sweat covering your face? Run you fool run, even as I speak seconds drip away from your life and their interest. No doubt by now they hate you, cursing your name. Who is this child, they ask with bitterness, who is this child, they spit to their neighbors, but not all is lost. If you run it just might be possible to salvage this wreck, play for them, woo them with your music! If then, if only then, you just might be able to win back their favor so that they might no longer hate you, perhaps they might even think well of you in memory, in passing. But run, run as if you were being chased so that when you arrive they might notice your short breath and excuse your tardiness because without sacrifice on your part there will indeed be no concert for there will be no one willing to open their hearts to your song.

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## Down the Hall

*-THRILLHOUSE*

With a very brisk strut, the man heaved himself past the small set of stairs leading into the entryway of a plain seven-story apartment building, set in a somewhat tight block of identical complexes. Looking over his shoulder, he caught notice of the remarkable amount of greenery, still somewhat vibrant even under the harsh late-autumn downpour. This part of town was on the outer rim of the city. If he were to travel just seven more blocks north, he would be greeted by a sea of clustered thickets and lanky twigs stretching high above his head, with a dirt trail leading into nothing but a dense wall of towering bark and impenetrable swarms of leaf. And yet, the man noted as he took off his nearly soaked cap, he was well protected here among geometric slabs of concrete and angular weaving of metal grids. Quickly tapping at a few buttons at the keypad by the steel door, he phoned a particular apartment several



floors up. A click greeted him, and silence awaited his response. "It's me," He sneezed, and a blaring tone shot through the speaker. The door had opened.

The interior – a stairwell with doors leading into a separate flat at each floor – was only a bit warmer than the afternoon thunderstorm outside. It was dry as well, and at this he gave a quick sigh of relief before beginning his climb. The steps before him were lit by several florescent tubes, two per floor, which did an effective job of banishing any remote sign of a shadow. It bathed the walls, painted an already pale sort of green, in a bleached aura that served to make visible each flaw of this aged building. With one hand loosely trailing the rubber of the railing, the fingers of the other gently ran themselves over the wall beside him. While his vision was somewhat blurred by this haze of white illumination, his skin could nonetheless trace the archipelagos of chipped paint and ravines of cracks and indents. As his shoes tapped against the green/white checker-tile floor, stone echoes shot vertically through the stairwell. They never ceased, but only faded into an abyss of nothing, creating an illusion of infinite ascent.

That would have to wait, though. Here, before him, was the door leading into the desired flat. The one he was summoned to, despite waltzing in and out of regularly. Pressing a small dusty button, he listened for the faint sound of a bell. Sure enough, a muffled buzz rang from within. He always figured it was quite lonely to live at the top-most floor.

A very metallic, very rigid melody sang from within. The locks on the door, all six of them, were quickly undone. Immediately the door opened a crack, still held by a chain, with a curious eye peering at him from within. The door shut, the chain was removed, and it swung open. Within stood a woman, greeting him and beckoning him inside. He obliged, while taking off his coat. She happily took it, her ruby lips (he only saw her in red lipstick) showing her teeth in a joyful grin and her eyes (she always had a faint bit of eye shadow on) emphasizing her ecstatic attitude. With a distinct giddiness, she quickly led him past the faded Victorian wallpaper and into the kitchen, where she set him down on a small stool before a square table. Before him was a very delectable bowl of stew, still steaming, intended just for him. She set herself right across

from him. Unable to restrain herself any longer, she began to yammer away.

The soup, while certainly well made, fell on his jaded tongue as a bland liquid. It seemed, in his mind, to share the same sort of plainness that had submerged the kitchen. At one point, he remembered, it had gleamed with the cleanliness of spotless white tile and the shining aluminum of new appliances, which did very well to give it a sophisticated new-age look. The soup was also absolutely delicious back then. When that was, he couldn't quite recall – all he had left was the memory entrenched in his mind. Now all that was left was the aged gray covering every tile, and the faded luster plaguing every bit of metal around him. As he recalled, she had once looked much better to him as well. She still looked the same, of course – a jovial attitude which flourished in her expressions, a thin and healthy figure, and an exceptional fashion sense. Nonetheless, he was sure that, at one point, she had looked better.

She talked about this. Then she talked about that. All the while he was mechanically dipping the spoon into the bowl, then guiding the steaming porridge into his slightly parted mouth, and chewing the meat and veggies while politely nodding and grunting to her chatter. He also noticed some wrinkles upon her face. Soon enough he finished, and looked at her with an intent expression, nodding through each barrage of statements from her. He searched for a break in her stream of conversation, caught one, and plowed through it - "So how is he?"

In a blink her expression changed, and an uncomfortable musk seemed to fill her lungs. "He arrived just a few days ago – stayed in his room this whole time," She said, after a pause. "I hear it was some sort of sickness?" He asked. Her eyes slowly drifted to a corner, hooked by troubled thought. "That's what the report was," she answered, with a slow nod "some sort of digestive parasite; delirium, fever, that sort of thing. They drained it out of him back at the site." With a blink, her gaze shot back towards him and her lips contorted in a troubled frown. "He was to stay at the hospital there –

supposed to, anyway. He insisted on taking his vacation then, and so they had no choice but to send him home,” She finished with a slight shrug, fiddling with her thumbs as she spoke.

The man let out a sigh and allowed his chin to rest upon a clenched fist. Staring out the window, he noticed that dusk had overwhelmed the streets outside – amber orbs of streetlight swimming in a still cascade of onyx. For a moment, he submerged himself in personal streams of thought. Then: “It’s been over a year since he’s been home, right?” She shook her head, “No,” she corrected “more like two.” He let out a low hum, and began to drum his fingers on the table. No longer content with this procrastination, he began to rise. “Well, it’s about time I finally take a look at him.”

“He’s in that room,” she said, pointing her manicured fingernail at door at the end of the corridor.

“Yeah, I know.”

Thick black greeted him as he entered the chamber, shutting the door on his way in. As his eyes adjusted, the blinding smog gradually cleared to reveal the single source of light – the glow of a streetlight beaming through the window. The rest of the room, however, remained in that dimensionless mass of black. Apparently, the room was a bit cluttered, as he could see various familiar shapes (a table, a bookshelf, a desk) silhouetted against the light of the window. And yet, no shape could be separated from the flat canvas that it formed from; it remained as a single geometry of corners and edges, all conjoined in a single object. Strangely, he had no urge to turn on the light – not that he could have found the light switch anyway. Using his palms as eyes, he eventually located a small stool. Sitting down, he became aware of a small bed before him. Squinting, he realized that a few thin beams of light fell upon the rumpled and obviously occupied sheets. The thing in the bed stirred, and seemed to turn itself towards him.

It sighed. “Ah, you’ve come,” was the greeting. “It’s been quite a while.”

“Yes,” the man replied. “A long while.”

“So why did you come?”

“To see you.”

“Is that all?”

“No, I wanted to talk as well.”

There was a slight pause. Eventually, the thing mentioned “You know, I was planning on finding you.”

“Really?”

“Yes, but then I reconsidered-.”

A series of coughs burst forth from the sickly creature, which then spent half of a moment heaving deeply. “Just too sick, you see.” The man gave a hum of agreement.

Another pause. His tone was quite timid during the conversation, kept at a whisper as if heeding to the silence around him. The voice of his (supposed) friend was also faint, but this emerged from an evident weakness – frailty of health exemplified by heavy gasps of air between words and occasional spasms of cough.

“Well then,” began the sick one again “I suppose we should catch up then. How have you been?”

“Fine.”

“Still work in the same place?”

“Yes.”

“And how is that suiting you?”

“Well.”

“That's good, that's good.”

A break – some more coughing. Then, he starts.

“So it seems you've run into something nasty down south.”

Something like a series of quick gasps erupted from the bed. He assumed it was laughter.

“Yes,” it answered, after calming down “in the thick of the jungle you sometimes can't help but running into something fierce. Maybe a wildcat here. Maybe a panther there. Hell, streams are filled with crocs, and grass is brimming with vipers.”

“This was a bug, though.”

“Yeah – microscopic little things. Started in my stomach, and then burrowed into my bloodstream.”

“What was it like?”

“Oh, terrible. Your skin gets used to bruises and scars, but you rarely get something that tears at you from the inside. Like locusts that buzz around in your stomach, eating their way outwards.”

“But you came back.”

It hummed in the affirmative.

“You were supposed to stay there.”

It hummed again, then simply said “I wanted to see you. Both you and her.”

For him, it didn't take long to realize just how warm the room was. The entire conversation he could feel sweat gradually condensing along

his brow, and then slowly drip down to his neck. A particular smell was gradually forming in his nostrils, his tongue tasting it every time he opened his mouth. It was heavy, greasy, bitter, and seemed to saturate the air. Eventually, he could feel it along his fingertips as he clasped his hands together. It was coating him; he was submerged in it. He shifted his weight in the stool.

“Do you remember when we were kids?” asked a low, choked voice after a while.

He thought a moment. “Yeah, I think.”

“How far back.”

“Well, probably just when I started my preschool years.”

“Good, then you remember when *we* were in school. I'm sorry if this seems like a tangent-”

“Oh no, no; it's fine – continue.”

“Alright then. I just remembered that time in the first grade; I think it was the first grade – yeah it was. Anyway, I remembered that boy in there, the one we made fun of.”

A smile crept upon his lips. “Yeah, the frail little ginger kid. He always had a nose full of snot and couldn't play sports. Miserable little bastard.”

More laughter forced itself from among the sheets. “Yes, yes! I'm afraid I forgot his name; I just remembered those few weeks where we planned to get him good.”

He then chuckled as well. “I remember that. We were going to kick his ass, bruise him up until he couldn't speak. Then we were gonna tie him to a skateboard or something, his face staring at the pavement while his naked ass hung in the air, and send him down that road – the one that dips straight into the lake.”

“Yeah, you've got it. We had this plan of attack going. The fast kids were going to run him down, and then the fat guy was going to tackle him, and then hold him in place while we beat and stripped him. It's too bad the fat kid opted out at the last minute, so we couldn't do it.”

“No, I think some kids still tried it.”

“Really? Do you remember what came out of it?”

“Well I hear they managed to tie him down to the board (couldn't strip him or beat his face) and pushed him off. The word went that, as he was squirming, trying to get the board to stop, he veered into a metal post. I'd imagine he was going pretty fast.”

“What makes you think that?”

“Well he was kind of messed up all throughout the rest of school. You remember that whacked-out red-head kid?”

“That was him!?” It was excited. They spend half a moment enraptured in laughter. “I still remember how he screamed nonsense throughout the halls and all the assemblies.” It sighed, when their hysteria died down.

“Oh, speaking of retards,” he began “Remember that fat chick we wanted to kill?”

“Oh man! It's coming back to me-” another set of coughs “-we were going to shank her as she was going home with a sharpened lunch pork. Why did we want to kill her anyway?”

“Cause she was the fat dyke who kept having seizures in class.”

“Yeah, right right. Never went through with that one, either. We were too scared of the consequences.”

“Nope, one kid went through with it.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah – right in the lunchroom. Just took a regular plastic spoon and jabbed into her side. Managed to scrape the kidney with the tip of it. I have no idea how he managed it, but they say he managed to get around half the handle inside of her.”

“Sounds bloody.”

“Well, they took her to ER.”

“How did she deal with it?”

“She died.”

At that, the conversation died down once more. The heat and the silence yet again swarmed him, and oppressed his senses. Yet again, he shimmied in the stool. A sigh escaped his lips. The thing took a breath, and turned away from him, apparently looking at something behind him, in the distance.

“Do you remember,” it began “the time we had a fight.”

He stayed silent, and only nodded his head.

“A soccer field. It was hot, we were hot. The game just finished. It was a bad game – lots of fouls and arguments through the whole thing. The other kids went back inside after the bell, but we stayed outside. We were bruised up, scratched up, and mad as hell. At first, we just shouted at each other. Then the typical shoving came.”

Yet again, he moved around on the stool.

“I guess it was bound to happen, like a spark around a puddle of gas. I think I was the one that set it off: I said you fought like a girl. Next thing I know, my gums are sore, my jaw feels like it was split into pieces, and all I could taste was my own blood. Another blink, and my left temple is pounding. I'm on the ground, staring up at your face. It was all contorted and red, like a tomato. I try to say

something, but your thumbs are pushing hard into my neck, and you're sitting on my chest. Then, for some reason, your expression changes. You get off me, and run away. You remember that?"

For the longest time he said nothing. All he could think of was just how hot the room was. The acrid smell. The way everything was greasy and moist. He thought about the freezing rain outside. About the dusty stairwell. About the worn apartment. About her, with her worn make up. The streetlight. The parasite. The locusts.

"Yeah – I remember."

"Why'd you get off?"

They buzzed inside him. They began to claw into his lungs, and scurry through his veins.

"I got scared."

"What?"

"You were crying."

The thing let out a small scoff.

"You were crying; I got scared," He affirmed.

More silence. Eventually, the thing uttered a simple "Oh."

Then he got up from the chair. He just then realized how much he had been sweating – his pants were completely soaked. More than anything, he wanted to leave. "So, is that what you wanted to talk to me about?" he asked. It moved again, this time simply staring at the ceiling.

"Yeah." it grunted. "Yeah, that was it. You can go."

Just then, a car passed by the apartment. From the street below, its headlights shone against the window. Dead, white light flooded the room. It stretched shadows all along the walls as it went by, a myriad of

elongated shapes. A tangled jungle of black. It frightened him somewhat, but then he looked down at the bed. There, briefly illuminated, was a face. It was his friend.

He sat himself down again.

"It's fine."

"No. I'm fine."

"We can talk some more?"

"We can talk much more..."

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## POETRY

### **Can't Live with them**

*-Anonymous*

I'm the crazy dominatrix  
Suited for life, not ready for routine  
Catch what you can since I'll soon be gone  
Not everyone is as lucky as you are  
Completely surrounded by maniac decision  
Look at me, I'm an attention whore  
But not everybody can catch the offer  
Pity for them

Pity for them, really.

### **Damaged Goods**

*-Tai*

When I woke up there was a girl wrapped around me.  
I couldn't sleep, so I straddled her face and her hair and her neck through  
the darkness and they were all soft and beautiful until I fell asleep.

In the morning she was gone so I studied the pictures on her wall.  
An old man, her father, no mother, friends friends friends and her.

I could feel her shoulder's laughing as we sat watching the moon on a  
bench and not talking.

There was a poem and I read the whole thing with its trite rhyming  
couplets like:

“Jade you good bitch, you are the queen bee,  
the bestest friend that could ever be,  
when I'm down and out, or passed out in a ditch,  
Just dial your number, your there in a cinch.”

Somewhere in the lines she kissed my cheek as I fell asleep.  
I reached out to hold her but my arms wouldn't move.  
*So I quoted Bukowski, but all she heard was drunken bullshit.*

## **“Forever”**

*-Malavox*

It's finally over, the jig is finally up  
The tables been cleared but I can't get enough  
It's a bruise to my ego, a shot to my heart  
It makes me wonder, should I ever restart?

The grass won't be as green, the sky won't be as clear  
Another person to my heart, could never be as dear  
But I need to move on just to prove I know how  
Putting aside that I still need you now

I'll wake up tomorrow, with a gap in my soul  
But nothings forever, or so I've been told  
I try to move on, but my heart holds me back  
Says "her loves like a safe, that you've just gotta crack"

I buy in every time, I believe that it's true  
Because I'll never love anyone as strongly as you  
But as the sun rises, and as the sun sets  
My love will is forever, I hope you never forget.

## **Loneliness (Burning Down The House; I Took The Attic To The Earth For A Reason To Talk)**

*-James Alden*

I didn't know what else to do; I broke  
furniture into fire-wood and sparked  
a flame that ate the quiet  
air.  
It's cold, up there, always on my own.

## **Rough Dogs**

*-James Alden*

A bitch outside has half a man in it  
but no-one ever stops to taste  
his drinking words or smoking thoughts  
for love.

*Despair is so bourgeois!*

## **Rubber Legs in Tropical Storms**

*-John Doe*

I need to smoke another one; my skin's  
all itchy and my legs seem to be  
vibrating down there.

Hell . . .

## **Untitled**

*-Venomous*

I find shelter in the greenhouse  
from the blazing fires  
freezing  
dropping quickly  
and hard

on the weakening authority  
evacuating from the aisles  
threatening uprising for their

looming demotions  
once the summer fades

as such  
those close to me suffer  
throwing about may-or-may-nots  
(I pray it is not)  
of their lives being pushed aside

while those around will suffer  
I will slip by unaffected  
knowing the panic and wishing  
to run away to the sun  
safe from the imminent change

if everything falls apart  
millions will pass through the door  
having *just* seen through six  
at *just* the right time  
to find shelter from the storm

yet if it happens  
millions will suffer the wrath  
knowing less than those before  
suffering from broken promises of greatness  
destroyed by the burning hail

I will return in ten  
(if springtime does not come first)  
avoiding the storm and  
building a new foundation  
on the ruined land

## ESSAYS



## Objective Omission

-Cornwallis

*Objectivism:Philosophy. One of several doctrines holding that all reality is objective and external to the mind and that knowledge is reliably based on observed objects and events.*

*Capitalism: an economic system based on private ownership of capital*

Many of the ideas in Objectivism are that of my own, to some extent. The theory of value for me is that humans choose to put value on objects that aren't needed to survive and reproduce. Everything else is what we decide it should be, and many share that common value to a certain item. This could ether be a child's play set or the idea of fame. Fame is nothing but what we elevate it to be something more, it doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things. We don't matter in the grand scheme of things.

One of the biggest flaws in Rand's philosophy is that she advocates *Laissez-faire* Capitalism, that men and women should be let free from the shackles of that socialist oppression. I gather that's where many of her supporters today come in. The first thing I'd address is Socialism, it isn't Communism. They are both steps that could be taken to reach a functioning state but Socialism has never really been acted out properly, take the Soviet Union. Lenin and his B- Boys went and had a revolution based on the Marxist principle. This was fine, but steps had to be taken after things got out of hand, which led to the state taking over the economy and secret police being created to find out who is trying to stop the proletariat.

Then Lenin died. This was the turning point, because following the Civil War between Trotsky, Stalin, and whoever else was running about in the USSR, Stalin took power. That idea of Communism is what most today assume is also Socialism. Cult of Personality, Mass Killings, Secret Police Monitoring, all of these are what many American's now fear most. The reality of the situation was that Lenin had the right idea. He took the economy into the state's hands to get it under control. The whole idea was

to let it go like that for about 10 years, before all the fog settled and they got a grasp on things, and then give it back to the hardworking proletariat. Countries like Russia needed a Quasi Dictatorship of sorts. You can't just let people run amok with freedom and social liberty because they wouldn't know where to start. Most Revolutions need leaders. Those leaders are expected to follow through on their promises.

Now moving to Objectivism and Capitalism. Sure, it seems right to implement Capitalism, a free market economy where no limits are imposed on the individual, where they can do what they want, pursue progress, create whatever crazy genius fantasy or build whatever little coffee shop they want and live the American dream, but fast-forward some years and we have problems. Those same people's grandchildren are running about in rags. They are murdering en masse, people die of starvation, and the air is growing stale.

Objectivism, as I understand, puts human consciousness up the creek; serve self-interest, live free and have your own set of virtues and value's. In some ways, I agree. Nietzsche had the right idea when he spoke against the social views on the meaning of life, being a nihilist. I agree with his ideas, they aren't for the faint of heart. I figured this out before I read him, but he reaffirmed some of my beliefs, although I didn't really need affirming, so didn't Freud. It is important to note that Nietzsche was also an optimist.

Rand took some of those ideas I'm sure. Let's get on to the meat and potatoes. Here is why Capitalism and Objectivism don't go hand in hand.

### 1) *Capitalism requires slavery*

Capitalism requires that many of the population be working under someone else's self-interest, a tenant true of Objectivism as well. You should be selfish and work how you want to work only if everyone follows this ideal no one will work. The reality of this situation would be grim, because if you subscribe to this ideology it

means that you would allowed to pursue your own self-interest, but there is no guarantee anyone else will help you achieve that self-interest. Doesn't matter whether you manipulate or even murder someone to get what you want. If you need a 40,000 strong work force to build Metropolis on the Everest, good Luck, because everyone else has a better idea.

In the book "Atlas Shrugged" written by Ayn Rand, many of the world's greatest minds, and successful businessmen, decide to abandon government regulated cities and instead create their own place to live to do as they please. That is the book in a nutshell, considering it is a thousand pages of walking Randian political ideologues talking at each other or at times themselves. These genius minds go off but leave one thing, an inexhaustible work force.

Let me hammer this point home. They have no work force to rely on. They have to do everything themselves. None of these people know how to do anything by themselves. They also don't have robots. They are forced to plant their own seed and drill their own oil (Which isn't even needed because another character makes a device which makes energy without running out, yet we have characters who brag about their oil.) This means they cannot have Objectivism. No one to manipulate, no one to work on their genius. If there is no one to work, no one will appreciate genius. The entire theory eats itself.

## 2) *Objectivism is a long way off*

Humans are still taking their baby steps, still very much in living in the pursuit of satisfaction and meaning in life, still warring with each other on things that make the civilization tick. If we all lived in the world Ayn Rand wants us to live, we wouldn't have the Tea Party. Perhaps we wouldn't need to, but every world is better without the Tea Party.

Objectivism strikes its first obvious nerve with religion, I think that was intended, but if Ayn Rand did read Nietzsche she might have been a bit more realistic about the situation. In order for Objectivism to prosper you need to get rid of faith, but if you allow God to die the world crumbles. The phrase "God is dead" isn't angst filled hate on how the

world has lost its morality, it's about the worry that if the society lost faith in god they would lost faith in doing anything because no one would really want to. It's like having a crisis of faith all around the world, at once. No one knows. It actually allows many ambitious men to come in and use their own ideals to create the perfect world. They tried that. People suffered.

Objectivism does require the world to be "brighter" then it is right now. It requires most of the human population to become selfish, manipulative, and egotistical people. Some already are, in the corporate world. Who else is interested in becoming this? This stills progression, it even regresses society because no one will cooperate with anyone. It doesn't create but destroys.

## 3) *Capitalism is a killing extreme.*

Capitalism is an extreme. Just as Communism was under Stalin, capitalism, not only in Rand's view but in many people's, gives the illusion of freedom, freedom to do what you want economically. Communism is both an economic and political ideal, as is Capitalism in America, only in this case it's business that controls the government. Maybe that is even better than what Ayn Rand could have dreamed up; here we focus even more on the laissez fair side of Capitalism.

Why is Capitalism an extreme? In theory there are no limits, except the ceilings set by business. You could be as economically successful as you are allowed to be, or in some cases, as you allow yourself to be, not counting the loopholes for success or factors beyond your control that contributes to that success. Nevertheless, the theory is great in theory.

In practice, Capitalism is worse than Communism. Rand believes in free market Capitalism, the search for profit forever, but maybe it isn't, since in the book Atlas Shrugged there are thoughts of society not existing if men are slaves to the system. I was confused. But what i get out of everything is no matter what moral thought or virtue you put into Capitalism it won't change the fact that

Capitalism doesn't work. Wait, aren't we talking about men not being slaves to the system? Isn't Capitalism all about men being "slaves" to the system which provides them with an assortment of freedoms for an amount of time they aren't being slaves, but they are being slaves all the time because of the requirements of occupying that certain position and paying back to keep that position?

Capitalism destroys everything for the sake of profit. When you have no boundary the world gets smaller and smaller and corporations get bigger. Capitalism imposes two of the worst possibilities, imperialism and monarchy, or complete destruction of society, coupled with the moral consciousness free Objectivism. There is a recipe for success if I ever saw one.

What's worse is that many of her current fans never read her books. Many have heard some of her ideas through word of mouth and decided to make some posters on how they are all John Galt. The game has clearly changed. You no longer subscribe to an ideology and stick with it, you can just take a part you like and call it your favorite. Recommend it to your friends, become John/Jane Galt.

It's simple. Eventually there won't be anything to make a profit off of. Capitalism dries up the world for the sake of money. We already live in a laissez fair America. The government is run by profit, for profit, and against all who oppose its idea of rich getting rich, poor getting poorer forever. There is no way for you to express your creativity, which Capitalism has a habit of crushing. Anyone against us is obviously a terrorist.

Shouldn't Ayn Rand then subscribe to Socialism, a philosophy which lets the worker go out and do what he wants to do? Objectivism would then have to be a bit different because there doesn't have to be moral absence and personal virtue. Working together for the common good could still work out, and it was Socialism that talked of how Capitalism killed the human creative spirit. I believe that is an important part of Objectivism. This relationship wouldn't even begin. Individualism was huge for Ayn Rand, and I'm sure for her fans as well. It's one of the few moral stances that are believed by a collective of people, and yet, each has

different views on what it is.

There should always be an aim for a balance, in everything. Combining two extremes don't eliminate the others negatives. Finally, you can't predict a human mind. Objectivism expects humans to be a certain way but I doubt many will choose to be that way. Some of its ideas are sound but it's ultimately too heavy handed to work out. As for Capitalism, why care? Do what you want to, except you can't. If it's all about wealth, well then, God-speed. The rich can't function without the poor, but the poor can function without the rich. They just simply behead them when the time is right. They tried that before. People cheered.

## Afterword

With issue 2, The April Reader has undergone major shifts in formatting and policy. The most significant of these is the dropping of anonymous crediting. There is now also a printer-friendly edition of the publication. The hope is that these various changes will be well received and better reflect the interests of our readers.

### *Why Anonymous Crediting Was Dropped:*

For TAR, the decision to pursue anonymous crediting was well intended yet in the end proved unsustainable. When rhetoric met reality the results were not particularly encouraging. Aside from a distinct group, most authors did not want to be anonymously credited. With the shift to attributed crediting, TAR hopes to be in a better position to serve authors. Any policy which scares away half a publication's authors must be considered carefully, and TAR has listened to the majority.

### *A Plea for Reader Participation:*

TAR's Printer-friendly version of issue 2 represents a move towards creating a paper circulation of TAR, and we would like to encourage readers to print out and share as many copies of issue 2 as they can. For a young publication such as this, it is imperative that TAR reaches new readers and authors. Reader participation is critical to publication marketing, and we ask that you help us. TAR wants to publish great works. YOU want to enjoy great creations. By printing and sharing we can both get what we want. Capish?

### *Embedded Advertisements and funding TAR:*

The April Reader is, and always will be, a non-profit organization. TAR authors and readers need not fear-scramming. This publication, however, needs to pay for its yearly website overhead (~\$70) and TAR editors are considering a paper circulation of the publication to reach out beyond the 'net. To this end, TAR proposes the addition of ~2 advertisements on our download page in order to provide TAR with a minimal source of funding. At the moment this is simply an idea being floated and TAR will highly value any feedback that you provide.

Ultimately, The April Reader's mandate is to compliment and balance the needs of authors and readers. TAR hopes that by clarifying these changes readers and authors will be in a better position to give their opinions on them.

As always, we'll see you at the end of next month.

## Credits & Information

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Special Thanks to THRILLHOUSE, our Authors, and everyone who took the time to download TAR

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### **And now for an informative word from Wildweasal on**

**copyright:** *Copyright law in the United States states that when you write or create any work, you as the creator of this work, possess ownership of this work at the time of its creation. When you submit something to The April Reader, you still retain the copyright to the work, and you still own what you have submitted. By emailing your work to TAR you are simply giving TAR permission to host this work on our Internet server. There is never a point in time at which TAR becomes the owner of your work and you will always own the work that you have submitted.*

See you next issue,

-TAR