

Literary

Mary
writing, random creativity, conversation and pie...

Now offering gravy on the side.



Pie From the Sky -

Sweet Words of Pie and Gravy From Your Admins



Hey guys. This month I would like to make mention that, at the time you're reading this, you still have a couple of days left to participate in our Featured Poem/Story and Erotica of the season by voting for the pieces which you think are best.

It is my intention to eventually take LiteraryMary into publication, hopefully at our one year anniversary, and I'd like to create the first issue out of the first year's Featured Work. We'll be starting small as the forum has, eventually building into a full fledged print reflection of the close community and immense talent we're collecting as so many butterflies pinned to a display on the wall in

my bedroom. The idea is still rough, but I'm confident that with member support we'll get there.

I would like to remind members that LiteraryMary belongs to you, so you should feel free to PM me or anyone from staff should you have ideas to make the forum better. Also feel free to let us know if anything is not working or if you think something should be changed.

The forum has been slightly modified and trimmed down and we will continue to make changes, adding or subtracting as needed to best suit the needs of everyone involved. The rules of Point/Counterpoint have been modified and made more exact as a result of member concerns and staff is no longer allowed to moderate debates which they're involved in.

At this time, I would also like to remind members to keep spreading our name through word of mouth. We're not going to pat you on the head for each new member you bring in, but trust you'll feel a glow inside as you watch the forum grow as if it's your own special little baby girl or boy, depending on which forum color you choose to use. ;)

One last thing... if you've received publication anywhere- let us know! We'd love to announce it here in the newsletter and let people know where they can look to read you in the physical world.

Until next month,

vodka
xxx

Issue 2
April 2007

Special points of interest:

- *Whose writing shone this past month? Find out with staff picks in Featured Slices.*
- *An extended Site Pie comes your table with picks from TsuTseQ and Silver.*
- *Strangedaze certainly has one heck of a tale to tell about one of his recent adventures.*

Inside this issue:

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Site Pie

Featured Slices from around the Forums

Silver's Pick

sonnet59 "The hues of beaten pallet grimly hide.."

By Ilan Bouchard

The hues of beaten pallet grimly hide
A face subdued and 'yond its childish years,
An idle flick of grave or deep concerns
Make haste in those she once could coincide.
The eyes upon a canvas face are worn

Beneath a gentle mask of smooth and cream,
Beneath her prospects plain and used to deem
Success no more than mere and words of scorn.
Credulity within her faultless mind
Is lost to hardened disposition taught
By ruthless moments of a mind distraught,
Expressed within her few paintings resigned.
Behold the innocence of yore refused
Upon this child and broken mind, abused.

TsuTseQ's Pick

**At the request of the author, this piece will be presented in its entirety.

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*Pray why do you so fear me child
When death will see us reconciled
And what was tamed again runs wild
Beyond the abattoir*

A Hawk Circling the Wind

Information can be penned. But wisdom rests in the action of the spoken word. That is why ours is not a written language, but an oral tradition, demonstrated as it is passed from mouth to mouth, hand to hand, generation to generation. We tell stories. That is why you cannot read. We save our most powerful stories for when snow covers the ground. That is the best time to hear them. That is how the world ends.

Once, buffalo shook the grassy steppe. Wolves howled beneath a tracker's moon. Eagles hunted from the sun. And humans cried in battle. And all of our spirits roamed together and we knew our names. You do not know your

name. They call you Jack or Jackie, or—because you are fat—Porky Pig or Miss Piggy. You eat only animals that never see the sky. You pull carts filled with coins for machines that promise riches without work, and you watch TV. That is why you are fat. That is why you do not know your name.

Johnny, who negotiates casino contracts and also does not know his name, invites you into his office to smoke rollies and drink Big Daddy Merlot through a straw from a box—and to tell you that the coins are about to be replaced with writing. “So I guess you know we’re upgrading to barcode slots,” he says.

But you did not know. “Will it still feel like I am losing real money?” you ask. The wall to your left is tiled with video panels that you once thought were windows.

“Shit, I don’t know,” says Johnny. “What’s real about money? Players like the barcodes because they don’t have to get their hands dirty. Management likes ‘em because... well, because coins are a pain in the butt. But mainly because people tend not to cash out.” Johnny’s desk is littered with documents that he uses as blotters and coasters. “See, an old lady might ring out her last six quarters, but she won’t print a ticket and then wait in

some long cashier lineup. She’ll just play ‘em and get lost.” His cigarette rolls from the ashtray, and starts a smoldering hole in a form stamped with a government fire safety logo. “That’s what it’s all about,” he explains, “getting that last nickel.” Johnny picks up his cigarette and douses the form with a splash of merlot. “What a waste,” he says.

A man with no thumbs who has been winning at baccarat fingers another black chip down a cocktail waitress’s top as she performs for him in the VIP wash-room. “Maybe I could learn to deal the cards,” you wonder.

“Nah,” says Johnny, “I thought about that. Even talked to a few of the pit bosses. A dealer’s gotta stand too much. Plus you’d block the cameras. Plus you got too many folds and crevices to tuck things away in. And to put it mildly, the thought of frisking you gives security the creeps. I mean it’s nice the noble red man doesn’t have facial hair—we must save a fortune on razors and aftershave and all that—and maybe if you didn’t smoke—like what, about three packs a day?—maybe then you’d have more of a... well, more of a *human* voice I guess... it just weirds everyone out that they can’t tell if you’re male or female is all.” He pushes the box of wine to you.

You drink from it. Then you light your next cigarette off the butt of your current one before taking a final fingertip-scorching drag and snuffing it on the soggy government form. You can see Johnny is confused about which of his personalities to use on you. "I'm afraid I cannot be of much help," you say. "I've forgotten myself." Then you drain the box.

Johnny takes a new box from his bottom drawer and stabs it with a letter opener. "Even if we weren't moving to barcodes, we'd have to find you something else," he says. "Those tow-motors weren't made to haul asses like yours around." Then he pokes the straw into the box's wound and starts sucking.

An obese woman who appears to have been dropped from a great height onto an electric scooter defecates in her adult undergarment so that she will not have to leave a machine that might pay out. A young factory worker who has just lost the rent to a dealer's five-card twenty tries to cover split eights with his wedding band, and is refused. You imagine a mosquito.

Johnny gauges the amount of wine remaining by hefting the box. "How would you feel about chaperoning escorts?" he asks. "We got a couple new ones. It'd mostly mean just driving the girls back and forth from the hotel. Maybe let the riskier clients get a look at you, sort of give them a feel for your involvement if you know what I mean. Stuff you in a goose-down coat, and I bet you're a pretty daunting... *person*. Like that whole androgynous thing you got going could work for you, make you seem ominous." There's a formality, almost ceremony, in the way Johnny pushes the box of wine across his desk to you. "So whaddaya say?"

"You want me to become a pimp?"

"Nah, nah, the casino does the pimping. You'd be more of a bodyguard-slash-chauffeur. Plus these aren't street whores we're talking about here. These are some high-class call girls—businesswomen. No one's jerking 'em around. They make heap big wampum. I mean, we're not in the prostitution business anyway. They're just affiliates. They get an obscene hourly plus keep all their gratuities, which, since they're mostly just comped out to high rollers, is probably a hell of a lot. Shit, I'd say you should get into it... if you have a snatch I mean... and maybe lost a couple hundred pounds... and were better looking."

The baccarat player returns to the table to lose so many hands in a row that he needs a marker to cover his commissions. The obese woman plays adjacent machines as they are abandoned. The young factory worker begins to remove his clothes—carefully, meticulously—folding them and placing them on the blackjack table's maroon felt. You know Johnny is fishing. So you just smile. Then you accept his offer by again draining the box.

Driving the casino's two escorts around is better than towing its coins. They are pretty. Their names are not Pandora and Eve. They have only chosen these names to distance themselves from their heritage. They are twins. It is hard to guess their age because they try to look worldly and weathered. Cocaine helps in this regard. They tell you that they dye their hair and shave their "pussies" in order to look tanned instead of native. Also to look less native they wear fake buffalo-fur boas, spiked cowgirl boots and short suede skirts with fringe and beadwork. On the way to each job, they sit in the backseat doing lines off makeup mirrors. They like to tease you. Eve covers your eyes with her hands. "Could you possibly drive any slower?" she asks. Her lacquered nails scratch and tickle your face.

You slow down even more and tell her that it is your job to keep them safe.

Pandora wraps her arms around your neck. "You shouldn't be allowed to drive below the speed limit in this car," she says. "I looked it up on the internet. It's got a hemi with 430 horsepower." Then she drops her hands to your chest and squeezes. "Nice tits," she says. "Do you work out?"

You tell her that Johnny has told you that, whenever possible, this car uses only half of its engine. Then you tell her that you exercise a little, but mostly you are just naturally well endowed. They both laugh and take turns feeling you, trying to guess. Eve thinks you are a man. Pandora thinks you are a woman. They are different in other ways too.

But they both like stories. On the way to work, they tell you one about a boy who, from the time he could talk, claimed he could fly. But his people never believed him. And so as he grew older, his faith grew tiresome, and he was ridiculed. Then, when he became a man, he climbed the mountain that was once a bear—for forty days he climbed this mountain. And then, from the peak of its nose, from higher than the clouds, he spread his arms and flew down to the earth. And as his people watched, they knew they had been wrong. Eve tells the words to the story, and thinks it is sad. Pandora tells the silences surrounding the words, and thinks it is happy. But they both cry. Neither can remember where they first heard it, only that the teller was very old and that it was snowing.

Tonight, instead of to a hotel, you are taking them to a local farm, a huge factory farm with its own abattoir. Johnny has explained to you that the owner is involved in a legal dispute with a national meat-packing company who claims that

some of his pork was returned by the Japanese and that this rejection has hurt goodwill in their North American and European markets as well. Pending the outcome of this matter, Johnny has advised the owner to store three harvesters and four transport trucks on reservation land. This way, if there is a large judgment, the plaintiff will have to go through the tribal court to seize and liquidate this equipment. And since the reservation benefits from both its use and storage revenue, and also since the tribal judge follows what is in his heart instead of what is on paper, this will not be easy.

At the farmhouse, even though they have been snorting cocaine and drinking vodka coolers, the women are quiet. In the distance, steel barns light up the night like small subdivisions. You press the doorbell. A chimed melody echoes from inside. Because you are upwind, you cannot smell the stench wafting up from the reservoirs beneath the barns or the pigs crowded together in the computerized pens above, or the terror of those in the abattoir's stockades waiting for the morning cut. But there is a scent that does rise up to you, *against* the wind, a mingling of disparate spirits.

A gaunt man answers the door. He is wearing a cream silk half-slip with a lacy hem and tiny satin bows sewn onto its bodice and straps. He too exudes the scent not carried on the wind, that same contaminated spirit. Pandora and Eve peek from behind you like small children. "I come at no extra charge," you tell him, "because you are a valued customer." His eyes make circles of the mascara he has drawn around them like war paint. In the cold moonlight, his glossed lips purse in the rictus of a kiss, oily and black. A young sow screams from the tight confines of a farrowing pen as she delivers her first pork. Beneath dark stubble, a thin white scar connects his left ear to his chin.

Eve kisses you on one cheek, Pandora on the other. Even though they have never done this before, it feels as if it is a ritual between you. But you suppose that even a ritual must be performed for the first time. "I'll wait for you," you tell them. Then they remind you that this is an all-nighter.

You wait in the car anyway, and listen to the yip and wail of coyotes in the woods behind the house until someone turns up a stereo inside and their song is lost. And you fall asleep. A Barn Owl shrieks. A hawk drops from the stars, sinks its talons into your heart, and carries you aloft. Far below, you can see the barns' tiny corrugated structures punctuated by fans, vents and antenna. The hawk circles faster. A whirlwind forms below you and reaches down to become a vortex, a tourbillion—faster and faster—a tornado, a twisting catheter and conduit—a straw that stabs down into boxes, draining them one by one. The Barn Owl shrieks again. And you wake up.

The barns are less than a quarter mile of gravel laneway from the house. But you take the car anyway. The smell inside the farrowing complex is so powerful that you pass out on your feet. When you come to, you are choking and have vomited down the front of your goose-down coat. The automated feeding and watering systems appear to have failed. In one stall, piglets nurse from their dead mother. In another they are being eaten. As your presence is sensed, squealing pleas and exhortations rise into a crescendo of hopelessness and suffering that physically pushes you back out into the night.

You remove the car's gas cap and wipe it on a serviette salvaged from the litter of the seven Egg McMuffins that you had for breakfast. Then you hold the serviette over your mouth and nose and enter the main hog barn. But here the smell is not as bad. The feeding systems appear to be

working. Each hog has stapled to it a tiny metal tag, a marker that allows the computer to track and control its trough time. The strong cannot usurp the weak here. None are sated, but none are starving. The floorboards are slatted so that feces can fall or be trampled down between them. All are hungry. All turn to face you, their eyes eerily human and beseeching. You notice a small black patent leather pump with a broken heel wedged between two slats. On the drive back to the house your tires dig trenches in the gravel as you use the entire engine. It has begun to snow.

Even though the house is not locked, you hit the door with your body, so hard that it splinters off its hinges and falls inward. Inside, the music is too loud to be heard. The smell reminds you of the farrowing barn. Bile rises in your throat, making your eyes water. It is a large house with many rooms. As you move from one to the next, motion sensors turn lights on and off and make you feel as if you are being followed. In the kitchen, a large gray rat drinking from the sink's dripping tap like a pet pauses to study you with yellow eyes. Otherwise, the first floor is deserted. As you climb the stairs to the second floor you notice that the fetid smell has grown weaker. You turn and head for the basement.

It is a large unfinished basement. Fluorescent lighting makes everything seem raw and clinical. Even before you reach the bottom of the steps, through a forest of roughed-in 2x4s and wiring, you see him. At first you think the carcasses hanging from some of the rafters are meat. When the first great ships appeared on the horizon, many of our people could not see them. They could not accept what their eyes were showing them. Some of the studs have been drilled and run with copper piping. Penciled notes have been written on many. They are framed too close together for you to squeeze between, so you must

find the doorways. It is like a maze.

The farmer does not see you until there is only one wall separating you. Pandora and Eve each hang by an ankle from blue electrical wire. Their skirts have been thrust down around their hips, and you can see how they have shaved themselves to look less native. The farmer's pretty half-slip is splattered with gore. He has gutted them like deer. Their insides, which are the same as all people's, hang over their faces. In one hand the farmer squeezes the handgrip of a short plastic pole with forked prongs that hiss and buzz as he prods their entrails. In his other hand he holds himself. The way their arms and free legs dangle makes it look like they are flying down from the ceiling. Their blood has formed a puddle on the cement below them. Their lacquered fingernails have been removed.

At first he tries to jab you with the pole's metal fangs. It is like a hornet's sting when he succeeds. But when you grab its shaft, he releases it and runs. He is skinny. So he can run between the studs. He can run through the walls like a ghost. Because you are fat, and also because your lungs are polluted, you cannot catch him. On the main floor you see the entryway's light go on as he leaves the house. But by the time you get outside, he has disappeared. It is still snowing. There is snow on the ground. In it you can see his footprints. And so you track him. You track him to the farrowing barn.

This time you are ready for the smell. You can hear the sows' lamentations as he moves around. Their cries follow him like the lights in his house. You follow their suffering to the other side of the complex. There you see that many of the pens have women's bodies in them.

The farmer approaches you. "Now do you understand?" he asks. But you do not

answer. He begins to circle you, slowly, from a distance, like a hawk. "Do you understand?" he asks again. Again, you do not answer. He moves closer, dancing, fluttering around you, reaching out as if to touch you, then backing away. He circles you like a moth. "It's important that you understand," he says. Many of the bodies are missing limbs. In a pen that is too narrow to even turn around in, a sow chews on a woman's foot. He touches your elbow. You are like a flame that he cannot resist. You take his hand. "Yes," you say. "I think I understand. Now walk with me."

Hand in hand he walks with you to the main hog barn. Again, all eyes turn to study you. But now the pigs are silent. They understand. Even before the farmer has understood, they understand. When the farmer also understands, he begins to scream. And when the farmer begins to scream, the pigs begin to scream. Their voices join together just as their spirits have. Because you are fat, you are strong. In your arms, the farmer kicks and scratches like an angry little girl. He calls you a freak. He pleads with you. But still you throw him into a pen with forty pigs. It seems appropriate to you that the first thing they do is emasculate him. The computer has taught them to share. They have already been castrated. They take turns consuming him.

You need tobacco. It has been hours since you last smoked. Then it occurs to you that every ritual must be performed for the last time as well. And so you leave the barn and return to the house, which is quiet now. In the basement you cut them down. You carry Pandora over one shoulder and Eve over the other. You climb the stairs with them. Again the house lights follow you. The rat still drinks from the tap. Out in the yard you remove your coat and lie down with them. You lay Pandora one side of you and Eve on the other, with your arms around them, looking up. It begins to

snow harder. Snow fills the air with flickering starlight. It covers you. Together, you become a mountain of snow.

They ask you to tell them a story. At first you cannot think of any, but then you remember one that was told to you when you were a child and rode a yellow bus. It is about two men possessed of demons so that all were afraid to approach them. But then a man who was not afraid came to them and ordered their demons out, and into a herd of swine that were feeding nearby. Eve wants to know what happened to the two men, and you say that either you can't remember or it was never told, but that perhaps they found other demons. Pandora wants to know what happened to the swine, and you tell her that they ran off a cliff into the sea. Eve thinks it is a happy story. Pandora thinks it is sad. They both want to know what happened to the man who commanded the demons. And you tell them that because of his belief that you should love your enemies, his people tortured him and put him to death so that he would be an example to others. Neither knows whether the story is happy or sad. But they both cry anyway.

By false dawn you stop shivering and grow warmer. Because you are fat, you are still alive. Your breath has melted the snow away from your mouth. Ice covers your eyes like lenses. High up in the sky, higher than the clouds, a hawk slowly circles the moon. Its voice soars down to you on the wind. *Climb! Fall!* The women's bodies are cold now. The sun rises, turning the falling snow into glitter. The wind stills; above you, the hawk floats with its wings spread wide. *We know your name!* They whisper it down to you.

Ping Pong!

March 2007

Chris

Okay, before we get to the literary stuff, I'd like to know what you're wearing right now. Please include undergarments, jewelry and piercings.

Hawke

Ummm... Nothing. (Just kidding.) Let's see. Jeans, a green sweater, really cute matching unmentionables, socks, runners, eight rings, a tattoo on my right ankle, a medic alert bracelet, and a necklace with two Chinese luck-dragon symbols and my dad's wedding band. By the way, my keyboard and monitor want to thank you for the coffee bath. And you?

Chris

Okay, from the top down: a little hair-band holding my ponytail which I have to wear for the restaurant, but sometimes leave on for the office because I feel it makes me look like Steven Segal before he got fat and retarded... well, fat anyway. A gray Value Village sweatshirt and a Clydesdale t-shirt, also from VV I've gone commando for the last two years (and highly recommend it, just keep underwear in the glove compartment for "emergencies"), so no briefs or boxers or anything. So really, everything I'm wearing (even my socks) is from VV--except my running shoes They're

my old squash shoes. The guy who used to own the blue-jeans I'm wearing for the first time today must've died or put on weight or something. I mean, the zipper works great and there are no holes. No holes! Except where my legs go in and come out of course. No piercings. No tats. No jewelry either. But, oh yeah, a condom--a new condom. It said on the package to put it on as soon as foreplay has begun. And I think it has now, don't you?

Where are you right now? I don't mean your address or the name of the institution or anything, just describe your surroundings, including people.

"But, oh yeah, a condom--a new condom. It said on the package to put it on as soon as foreplay has begun. And I think it has now, don't you?" - Chris

Hawke

Ooo purrrrrrrrrrrrrr Come here. *ahem*

Well, it's not exactly an exotic setting. I'm in my kitchen, obviously at the computer desk which is situated in the corner of the room beside the patio doors that lead to the deck, my eclectic collection facing me on the desk's shelves. Wish

they'd stop staring at me. It's unnerving, really. Smiling flowers and Anubis and two mice on a log and a tiny teddy bear and angels and fantasy pictures on the wall... and the dragons. The dragons!

Wha'der ya mean--institution?

Did the condom come with the jeans? Scratch that. I don't want to know. Pretty sure no one else does, either.

So to back at-cha, describe the basement... I mean, your surroundings, including people.

Chris

Did you just purr, and tell me to come closer? ...Wow, are these things ever stretchy! And yes, this one's brand new. Value Village doesn't carry "previously enjoyed" ones. And although I'm not above rinsing them out, being as today's Valentine's day, I thought I'd crack open a fresh package. Check it out. Notice that I've unselfishly fitted it so that the patented sensu-ribs are on the outside. Why are you squinting? You didn't mention glasses or contacts earlier.

I'm at "work." My desk, which is really a wooden table raised up on 2x4 blocks, is littered with numerous ATM and financial gateway manuals in white binders, 2 books on Qnx 'C' programming, 2 modems (neither of which has been

ckm vs. Hawke

used in years), my lunch (2 bananas), a cement stained-glass patio stone (sun), 3 ceramic cups (one with a splash of green tea, one half full of twist ties, and one with a dozen or so button-pins with stuff like “I’m surrounded by idiots” and “You’re welcome to your wrong opinion” on them), yellow post-its (of forgotten phone numbers), a can of Gouda lentil soup, a pair of hand exercisers, a phone (I mostly have no clue how to work), a few pens, an antediluvian 3.5 floppy and a CD, a thing that looks like a mousetrap but is really for holding sheets of paper that was given to me by my secret Santa 3 years ago and that I’ve never used, and 9 Transit Petroleum gas cards I was testing a Fuel Management System with back in 2004. In front of me is a cheap beige loveseat. To my far right is a real desk with two XBase manuals on it that hasn’t been sat at in almost a year, a metal cabinet full of obsolete documentation and covered with knickknacks, my favorite of which is a carving of a female hand giving someone the finger, followed closely by a photo of my long dead Himalayan cat, Princess (a.k.a. Poo), when she was a kitten and an even older photo of my wife standing on a beach in Tofino, BC and looking very skinny indeed. There’s a smaller filing cabinet in front of

me containing herbal painkillers and stimulants, sunglasses and chocolate almonds, all of which I’ve been known to horde and/or collect. There’s a cork-board with a picture of a guy in a suit with his head up his ass and an “anti-stress kit” which is really just a sheet of paper with the words “BANG HEAD HERE” printed inside a circle, 4 computers (2 of which I never use), a fichus in a 5-gallon pot and 2 hanging pathos. Oh, and a cardboard box full of Zehrs bags.

I’m sorry. I can’t seem to hit the ball back in a very timely fashion. But maybe now that I’ve lost everyone, we could fool around a little? Tell me, who was your first? Your second? No names of course--but scenarios, and don’t spare the details

Hawke

... ..

Thank you, Chris, for that... very detailed... and enlightening... uhh, what was the question again?

Okay, let’s get it on. I mean, let’s get down to it. I mean... How about giving whoever is still reading a look at what makes Chris Miller tick. Describe yourself as person. As a writer. What are your likes and dislikes? What or who motivates and/or inspires

you? Favorite and least favorite authors, and why. Favorite color (for no reason at all). And lastly, who was your first and second? Details, please. Inquiring minds want to know.

Chris

I’m kind of loath to describe myself as a person. I find that people who say, “I’m the kind of person who [whatever],” almost never are. So add them (me) to my dislikes. I also dislike the focus of the publishing industry on celebrity as opposed to product (Not just in writing either.) One of my favorite authors is Harper Lee. She only wrote one novel: a classic. She could’ve published anything after that, but didn’t. Compare this to Stephen Donaldson’s brilliant and successful first novel, “Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever,” followed closely by four more in the series (each much better than the next). Then his incomprehensibly horrible “The Gap Into [this and that]” sci-fi series, book one of which his publisher, while acknowledging was a very bad standalone novel, suggested become (and so became) the beginning of a truly awful and protracted *ilogy.

To me, the writing’s the thing. One of my favorite poems ever was published in a PC Magazine fifteen years ago. It was called “Ode to Random J. Hacker”

Ping Pong!

March 2007

and was supposed to be a funny parody of Yates or someone. I only read it once or twice, but bits and pieces from it still surface, still haunt me. I can't find it on-line. It was written by "Anonymous." The author never took "credit." Whoever you are, I apologize for my butchering of the following snippets, and for my memory's many omissions. Even so, your work continues to move and define me.

Let us go now, you and I
For fast Chinese and talk of years
gone by.

Of frantic ten-hour hacks
To get that midterm off our backs.

Of code that twisted, doubled back
and bent
And finally, set into cement,
Came through with an under-
whelming B.

Don't ask me what it was,
I don't care what it does,
Just how it does it.

Wakened to my terminal's insis-
tent feep,
I see I've been logged in since late
last week,
Take another slug of Jolt and fall
asleep.

I grow old, I grow old,

Dbase II and Wordstar are no
longer sold.

I'm no Bill Gates, nor would I
want to be.
I'd rather parse the fish than own
the knife.
Imagine, owning Moby Bux,
But chained to forty-million lusers,
What a life.

On Bix the experts come and go,
Bragging about how much they
know.

Goateed, pallid, overweight,
Willing to pull a second shift, then,
hell, a third,
To keep some session from a dead-
locked state.
At times, to put it mildly, unre-
strained,
At times almost a nerd.

I've heard the networks singing,
sending packets each to each,
Nothing for the likes of me.
Where will I go, what will I do?
Dare I try to teach?
To take my handheld portable and
hack upon the beach?

We hackers dream our hacker's
dreams
Of faster search and sort-merge
schemes.
And linger by our leading edge,
Never wondering what is pending
in the cache,

Till practice hurtles past us and we
crash.

David Foster Wallace is my favor-
ite author. I like how he's man-
aged to transcend the rules of not
only form and grammar, but of
publishing--his idea-density, how
he "becomes" his characters, how
his brilliant 1200 page sci-fi,
"Infinite Jest," according to leg-
end, had marketeering types freak-
ing, begging him to wrap it up. I
hope he continues to write only
when (and as long as) he has
something to say, even if it means
he has to starve or get a job--even
if it means he never writes another
word.

So what got you into writing
Hawke? Why do you
write? What, in your wildest fan-
tasies, would you hope to accom-
plish though it?

Also, I'd like you to describe your
job, what you do. I'm envious of
anyone whose profession actually
matters, who helps others. (All I
do professionally is implement
quasi-legitimate salami scams to
separate the financially challenged
or apathetic from their \$.) I know
how private and discreet you are,
but I'd really love a hypothetical
case study, sort of a personal com-
posite example. Please. I touch
your cheek.

Hawke

To be honest, I've been writing so

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long that I don't really know what first got me into it. I suppose it was a combination of several things: the need/love of writing, a story to tell, being raised pretty much as an only child--my two older sisters grown and gone before I got to know them; an over-active imagination and no outlet, overprotective parents, a crush on my elementary English teacher, a desperate desire to please my family (which I never did) and find my niche (which I never have). I continue to write for the same reasons, mostly for the love of writing. But it's also the need to control something, if that makes sense. To be taken. Transported. Swept up and swept away. They say the mark of a good work is to make the reader forget they're reading. That's true. But I'd add that the mark of a productive work is to make the writer forget they're writing. That's not to say all productive work will pass the mustard, or will even be liked. But oh the power of the written word. The ability to change views, hearten, steel, sting, inspire dreams. To bring alive hope and voice and focus and thought to whatever or whomever has none. Can anything (short of physically inserting someone into another's shoes) do the same?

I don't think in terms of what I hope to accomplish through writing, but rather, of what writing has

done for me. Anything that comes out of it is just icing.

As far as my job goes, there isn't all that much to tell. I work with

"I think my main characters are bits and pieces of all of "my boys" rolled into one, which would explain why I write predominantly in the male POV. And absolutely they inspire me, both as a writer and as a person." - Hawke

underprivileged/at-risk teens in a public middle school. I mostly listen and try to guide; it's the kids who do all the work. Since every case is as individual as each teen, I can't really give a hypothetical case study. What I can say, though, is that I'm very proud of "my boys."

Now, to turnabout What got you into writing? Why do you write? What, in your wildest fantasies, would you hope to accomplish though it? Also, what is your definition of "success"? Please. I touch your cheek.

Chris

It's funny, but I just found out at lunch yesterday that my dad has a Masters degree in English Lit--that his (now lost) 150 page thesis was

on the works of 18th century poet, Christopher Smart, as influenced by the library books he (Smart) borrowed after his release from St. Luke's Hospital Asylum--that I am his namesake. So my dad's 80, and only yesterday do I find out he has an English Lit degree and named me after Christopher Smart. Maybe this is because my dad's never written any fiction It's also funny that my dad didn't find out until last year that I've always known I was going to be a writer. Maybe because English Lit is about the only faculty I never took any courses in, and because I've never "wanted" to be a writer. I've wanted to be everything from a great spiritual leader to a drug addict to dead, but never a writer. Writing's just something I've always known I would do. Only in the last few years have I begun to enjoy writing close to as much as having written. Nothing makes me feel stupider than writing. There's nothing like sitting with fingers poised over a keyboard, staring at blank page cum screen, to drive home the fact that I don't know shit about anything, and that every idea that trickles into my head is a miracle

I fantasize all your usual writerly fantasies: wealth, fame, adulation--adoring nubile females pushing and shoving in long lineups pursuant to emotion-packed readings so that I might sign their intimate

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body parts before the finger-paint runs out--that sort of thing. I also fantasize making, if not the world (which I've sort of given up on), then one or two people's lives more interesting and tolerable and understandable. I fantasize connecting to others through my writing. I fantasize being loved, but loving is my definition of success. So I put my hand over yours there on my cheek, I trap it there. Tell me, Hawke, why are you proud of your boys? Do they impact your writing? Hmm. Maybe that's a stupid question. I mean, how could they not? What I mean is, how do they impact or inspire your writing?--by which I mean your thinking, your worldview? What is your worldview anyway? What is it that keeps you

"I was wearing your basic flimsy open-arsed hospital gown. There were four young female nurses on hand (which seemed excessive) all flirting with the cute young Guelph internist who'd be "doing me." The treatment room was chilly." Chris

from playing Russian roulette until you win?

Hawke

I'm proud of "my boys" because

of who they are. Some have gone through what most people could never imagine, yet they're still good kids with good hearts who see things differently than everyone else, see with eyes far older than their age. But still, they see with hope. Unlike others their age, these take nothing for granted, not even help--meaning they appreciate literally everything and even look out for others who've slipped under the radar and letting me know, often taking them under their wing themselves. Kind of a domino effect that I can't really explain. All I know is how very honored and humbled I am to have their trust, and how they amaze me each and every day.

I think my main characters are bits and pieces of all of "my boys" rolled into one, which would explain why I write predominantly in the male POV. And absolutely they inspire me, both as a writer and as a person. As for me, my worldview has been jaded for a long time. But the boys are such that they've given back far more than I could ever give them. Kind of reminds me of the saying Hope springs eternal or perhaps Strength from adversity.

What keeps me from playing Russian Roulette until I win? I don't know that we don't play it every

day. I mean, if you subscribe to the chaos theory (Butterfly Effect), then who knows the wheel you set into motion; when that morning's drive makes you forget to smile at someone you pass in the hall which puts them in an off mood, who in turn is short with somebody else without thought, who in turn goes about their day a bit put out and distracted and ends up snapping at another picking their kid up from the daycare at the end of the day, who in turn acts up in the back seat because they've picked up on their parent's bad mood, who then turns in their seat to reprimand said kid instead of stopping at the intersection you're crossing as you make your way home. (Yes, I think about things like that.) So I don't pull my hand away. Instead, I smile.

The same questions back to you. And I'll also add (if I may be so bold as to borrow from strange-daze and hisgaze's pingpong): does your personal life influence what you like to read and write? If not, then what does? And thirdly, what are some of your eccentricities that readers might want to know about? Like for example what would be the largest object you've ever had inserted into your ass?

Chris

(Note: I've taken the liberty of making a few minor edits throughout this conversation as a whole,

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and to your last entry in particular. Nothing that affects the voice or flavor or tone or anything. Just the odd bit of grammar, such as missing words and whatnot. You probably won't even be able to spot my alterations, they're so picayunish.)

In rereading, I was again impressed with your motivation for writing, i.e. to influence and affect others' thinking. Yes, yes that is indeed a huge part of why I write too. Like you say, is any art form more compelling?—more literal?—and yet, at the same time, more symbolic? Although I tend to try more to persuade people that they are wrong about whatever it is that they believe in and hold dear than to convince them that my take is right. Maybe if I mature as a writer, I will discover some truths of my own.

Almost exactly 5 years ago, on Valentine's day morning, I had what's called a colonoscopy. I was wearing your basic flimsy open-shouldered hospital gown. There were four young female nurses on hand (which seemed excessive) all flirting with the cute young Guelph internist who'd be "doing me." The treatment room was chilly. Residue from the few mouthfuls of green Jell-o I'd been allowed to indulge in the prior evening (after double oral enemas had

cleaned me out) was trickling from my ass and I was shivering as much from nervousness as cold. A needle was already taped to a vein in my right hand. I was asked if I wanted "something." My current wife is prescribed Lorazepam for her fear of flying. But when we went to the Dominican, we each dropped one. My ex-wife was once prescribed Demerol tablets for her migraines, which we then crushed up and snorted. So I knew I liked that too. So I said yes. After he hit me, I felt very droll indeed. Even though it was hard to form words, I tried to join in their Valentine's day banter. Actually, I felt like the life of the party: butt-naked, shit-faced slurring, leaking green Jell-o out my ass not withstanding. The internist said I'd probably fall asleep, or at least forget everything that transpired. But I never did. I watched the whole 4-foot adventure into my colon on a color monitor and remember every word that was spoken. Afterward, I read a paperback in recovery. Later, at home, I played Go on igs—and kicked ass. So the reason I might not schedule another colonoscopy is not because I mind the day of squitters and fasting, or having a camera snaked through the entire length of my large intestine up into my ilium, but because I'm afraid I enjoy it too much. But, like this woman pastor at some spiritualist

church in Cambridge I attended a few times in a failed attempt to salvage post-divorce relationship #10 quoted from someone else: "You live between the trapeze." And like Saul Bellow said: "Use your life. That is your material." So maybe I will, too. Anyway, I hope and believe this answers all of your above questions.

Although, I'm curious, I won't presume to ask about any colorectal adventures you might've had. But I'm also curious about that crush you had on your English teacher. How'd that pan out? Was he your first serious crush? If not,

*"My first real kiss happened during the first year of high school. I don't remember much about it, other than it was late evening and I didn't expect to be kissed, so I didn't have a clue what to do. That, and he was a horrible kisser, almost breaking my nose and drowning/suffocating/crushing me all at the same time." -
Hawke*

then who? Maybe you could tell me a little about your first real kiss. Maybe you can't. What are you reading right now?—as in literature-wise and not this of course. Do my hands feel cold to you?

Ping Pong!

Hawke

(You didn't think I wouldn't notice "Like for example what would be the largest object you've ever had inserted into your ass?" lol I'm pretty sure I'd never ask that, actually. But please edit away—absolutely. I'm sorry you have to. Should have checked it myself. Meh.)

The crush ended, predictably, and yet not. As I said, he was my elementary teacher. Grade 6, I believe. No word of a lie, the man looked /sounded/acted exactly like Paul Michael Glaser (Starsky) from the original Starsky and Hutch TV series. (To complete the picture, his best friend (another grade 6 teacher) looked exactly like Hutch. So really, what was an impressionable young girl to do but fall for him/them? And yes, I still remember their names, being one of the chosen few privy to that info.) Then came the morning when he failed to show up. Naturally the class had no intention of informing the office of that, instead spending the next few hours going literally mad... until the principal pulled an intercom reverse, told us all off, and then demanded to know what we'd done with him. (Okay, so it was more like Where is he?--it just sounded better than the other way. So anyway...) Not long afterward,

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"Hutch" and the gym teacher found him in the janitor's room directly across from ours and, with the entire class looking on like dumbstruck witnesses of a horrific accident, practically carried him out of the room and off to the office, his body completely soaked with sweat, his face and neck beet red. I never saw him again after that. Nor did I find out if it had been drugs or some medical condition (although the rumor mill leaned more toward drugs).

My first serious crush was in junior high with a boy so full of himself that he barely knew I existed. My first real kiss happened during the first year of high school. I don't remember much about it, other than it was late evening and I didn't expect to be kissed, so I didn't have a clue what to do. That, and he was a horrible kisser, almost breaking my nose and drowning/suffocating/crushing me all at the same time.

I had started Anansi Boys by Neil Gaiman but had to give it up when my muse got back to work, having made it a practice never to read published works while writing in case it subconsciously spills over into my own. Will get back to it though... eventually! Same questions back to you. And your hands feel very warm to me. Am I blushing?

Chris

No worries. You've spotted tons of my typos. I can't even remember what my fix was anymore, it was so trivial. So that "ass" thing could've been it. Wow, I'm sur-

"Well my first outlet was spool-knitting. Basically you just braid yarn into this long snake..." -

Chris

prised you still like guys, what with your first two crushes both turning out to be gay stoners and then that slobbery kiss.

I'm also surprised by your practice of never reading while writing. I like having my style (and even thinking) influenced by the various authors I love the most. When I was younger I used to read shitty novels because they made my own efforts seem less bad. But now I only read (recreationally) what I think will influence me in a positive way. I steal others' muses if I can (fickle, non-monogamous creatures that they are). It's also a great way to broaden your voice and repertoire I think. In software there's a saying that any language that doesn't change the way you think about programming isn't worth learning. I'd almost say any "book" that doesn't change the way you think about writing isn't worth reading. Even deliberately trying to mimic what works best for you is a great way to reverse-engineer and thereby understand

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how and why it does. Plus, when aren't you writing?—if you get my drift.

I think I was 17 when I got my first decent kiss. She was 21, liked to baby talk, and snorted when she laughed. At first it was really cute and endearing and sweet, then it got on my nerves. Then I went after her roommate and she dumped me. Doh! Maybe I have a fever... or something. No, no I'd say you're more flushed than blushing. You seem out of breath too. Are you pissed off? Ooohh...

Hawke

Gay stoners? lol No, not at all.

Ah, but you didn't say anything about decent kiss. You said real kiss. Methinks you're not playing fair here.

I'm an avid reader between works. Voracious, really. But since I tend to have a lot of plates spinning at once, reading while writing isn't for me. And I am writing right now. Sorta. In fact, I have four short stories on the go. Okay, so they're the same short stories I've had on the go for the last little while. Even so...

sigh Clearly I'm not at my usual speed. Guess I need to start pushing myself more instead of waiting for the stories to germinate

on their own.

Maybe you do have a fever... or something.

You're obviously creative. What other creative mediums have you used to express yourself (e.g. painting, drawing, wire jewelry making, etc.)? If you could impart three things to the next generation of writers, what would they be? And lastly, describe Chris Miller's perfect day.

Chris

Well my first outlet was spool-knitting. Basically you just braid yarn into this long snake through a spool. Then I did some drawing and painting, just skipping over the whole "realism" thing because I sucked at it. Played classical guitar for years. Had a decent repertoire, even some compositions, all forgotten and lost now. Software used to be a creative outlet for me and I even had some machine language packages published for the C-64/128 by Spinnaker, Pro-line and RTC. In fact, I just googled one: From <http://www.zimmers.net/bbs/docs/ebbs.txt>:

6) Chris Miller : Buddy 64/128 author. I must say this is the BEST assembler I have ever used. I use it exclusively now and without it

EBBS wouldn't have xmodem or the machine language support file.

Wow, over 25 years old and still "out there." I used to love programming, did it 16 hours a day. Now it's just a pain in the ass though. The older I get, the better I used to be. But enough bragging.

I'm not sure my perfect day is possible on Earth any longer. Or maybe that's how it's supposed to be: imperfect. Sometimes I see writers as oysters. We just lie there getting tossed around by the ocean until a little spec of grit or sand or whatever makes its way in, and which in order to make tolerable we construct a pearl around, and which, to continue the metaphor, leads to our being pried open and harvested. So to write, I think you have to be easily irritated, but also sort of passive and enduring, and not averse to being pried open.

I only have the following for the next generation of creative writers. Write for love. By this I don't mean so that lots of people will love you. I mean so that you can love them. This is true of any art. I think Jimi Hendrix, for example, got it backwards in his no doubt personal, "...searching for his heavens above, while dying to be loved..." lyrics (Easy Rider). Being loved is nice. But it really doesn't feel much. I mean millions of people can love you to

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pieces and still not be enough. It's never enough. So use your art to try to connect to and understand—and love—others. Loving—that's what really schmecks—and that's where this old hippie thinks it's at.

So, before I throw all your questions back at you, my secretive Hawke, I want to publicly thank you for encouraging me to compile my first collection, then for reading and editing and reviewing the almost 3 dozen pieces vying for a spot in it, and then creating its absolutely kick-ass cover. I know we're flirting and teasing and fooling around like I guess you're supposed to in these things. But here I'm serious. Thanks for giving my art *raison d'être*. (That there's French for "reason to be" I think, and even though it's about all the French I've retained from 6 years of classes, still makes me sound very worldly and cultured, don't you think?)

Now I lick your nose. And back to you with your excellent questions.

Hawke

I have to answer them? I thought asking would be enough. *grin*

My first outlet was music--specifically singing. I was in the choir every year of school and,

afterward, a small band. There is a cunning way to sing in front of people Basically, the lights man would blind me so I couldn't see the audience. I also sketched, but with Paint Shop Pro 8 it's now manips (picture manipulations).

My perfect day would be to have a day to myself, a pot of coffee, and a really good, fully cooked idea. (Nowhere near as eloquently worded as your answer, mind, but... well, there you go.) Oh yes, and I'd also like to sleep in and, later, talk to my friends. What? Too much?

I'd tell the next generation of creative writers not to write for the money or to be a household name. If you do, you're in for a rude awakening. Do it because to not do it is inconceivable. And while you're at it, never stop learning. I should also say here that writing has given to me more than I've ever given it. Just look at the wonderful people I've been fortunate enough to meet; people I would have never met otherwise, had it not been for writing.

I thank you and I appreciate your very kind words, but I think you have it backwards. It was all my pleasure, so I thank you. Thank you, you dear, sweet man, for sharing your work with me, for

listening to my thoughts, and through it all, for honoring me with your friendship. That means more to me than gold. Now I kiss your cheek.

So, when are you going to cut your hair?

Chris

When I was in University I once went two years without brushing or cutting my hair or beard (Yes, I washed!) It gave me something to do in class: twirl the 'stache, pull knots apart. What I'm saying is, don't hold your breath. But probably in May I'll prune it back for the hot weather.

Had a thought for a themed "fun" competition here like the LM over at WF. But instead of one theme, there would two—randomly disparate ones. Because I think when a writer draws only one "shape," it almost always winds up kind of anecdotal and shallow. But when she draws two very dissimilar shapes (the further apart the better) and then loosely connects them (like the way you draw a cube by connecting the corners of two squares), you get a cool 3-dimensional object, or, to lose the metaphor, a story with much more depth and meaning. What do you think of that idea?

I'd kiss your cheek too but, with you kissing mine, my lips won't reach. I hope you don't give me a

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hickey. My ex wife gave me a neck hickey very early in our “courtship.” Okay, maybe too early—technically—leading to the hardest punch I’ve ever taken in the face. Saw stars and everything.

So what kind of band was it? I mean what kind of music? What kind of gigs? Write your own music? Any recording? Since I know you own horses, I’m guessing CW? Too stereotyping?

Hawke

I like your “fun” competition idea. One could really run with it. It’s much like an original idea (two or three or five previously unrelated ideas that come together and create something new), only with specifics. More depth and meaning--yes. More of a thinker and at the same time allowing for more variations. Where do I sign up?

My music tastes are much like what little I collect--eclectic. But no, it wasn’t country music; more mainstream, really. It’s a misconception that horse people automatically like country music. Reminds me of competitive cattle owners/showers, who used to blast their own individual “theme” music while they pulled up as a way to announce themselves. Most played rock. A few, classical. Only one played country, specifically Fox

On The Run.

What is your favorite word? Least

“If you’re nervous maybe you could put me in one of those bundling bags like Eliza did Travis in your story? Wouldn’t that be fun?” - Chris

favorite word? Favorite curse word? And now, I give you the floor. Please add anything you’d like, or anything you wish you had been asked in regard to yourself or your writing.

Chris

The floor? You give me the floor? Couldn’t we just both sleep in the bed? If you’re nervous maybe you could put me in one of those bundling bags like Eliza did Travis in your story? Wouldn’t that be fun?

Glad you like the competition idea. This whole “connecting disparate things” in writing is a recent almost epiphany for me.

My favorite word is “yes” if I’m asking a lover if she’s into it, and “no” if I’m asking my dentist if I need a root canal. In other words, context defines my favorite word... although I’ve always been attracted to “spoonerism” for some reason.

No Hawke, you’ve let me rant sufficiently I feel. And the deadline is upon us. I feel good. I feel spent. I need a smoke. I wish I smoked. I miss smoking. I miss red meat. I miss... ah, fuck it. I want to thank LiterayMary for giving me the opportunity to interact with you here in this way. I want to thank you for letting me too, of course. Thanks for the dance sweetie. It was a lot of fun. Thanks for being you, for sharing your beautiful self with me.

Screw the floor. Your side’s getting cold. Hop in. Tie this sucker up.

Hawke

No need for a bundling bag.

I feel good too. And I smoke... mmm, maybe later. Thank you to LiteraryMary for allowing us to play. And thank you, you dear man, for the dance and for sharing your wonderful self with me. It was a pleasure.

hops in



Hawke's Sweet Slice

"Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush."—Doug Larson

Ah, spring. The mere mention of the word brings thoughts of green grass, spring cleaning, fresh air through open windows, BBQ's, hot apple pie cooling on the windowsill (which I've never done) and walking the dog without bundling up to the eyes. It also means the neighbors will be out in their back yard on their lawn chairs smoking pot, while their comedian cum jailbird teenage son puts hotdogs in everyone's mailboxes and bananas in everyone's tailpipes (the idea no doubt nicked from the movie *Beverly Hills Cop*) and the wasps, who've just moved into your shed and looking to fill their pantry, gear up to fight you to the death over either—but so what? Wasps are just the beginning, and sure they are; there will be others.

It was so wondrous to see the Canada Geese returning. Far less wondrous will be the return of everything else. Mosquitoes, flies, millipedes and every form or creepy-crawly imaginable (and a few no one can imagine, nor want to) will soon have their nasty way with the females of their respective species and have baby... whatever's, who will grow up to be big... whatever's, who will decide against roughing it and paste themselves face-first to your screens

with bug-eyed, pleading looks, while the more inventive will walk, swing, fly, inch, jump, climb, crawl and chew their way into your home just in time to join you in your shower, or worse, kamikaze your morning coffee. But that's okay. We'll be ready. We'll go to Safeway in droves and corner the market on damn near every kind of bug killer, repellent and trap imaginable, right? Yep. We're tough. We come from hunters and gatherers. We're outdoorsy types who've been all but shut-ins for the last ten months, and nothing—*nothing*—is gonna to stop us from enjoying nature, including nature.

Speaking of nature, I'm also not good at having to contend with long lines of campers all in a hurry to get to a campground site that would make the average backyard look spacious. But that's the thing of it, isn't it?—it's not their backyard. It's different. It's somebody else's. Somebody who will let you drag your lawn chairs out and drink your beer in the illusion of woodsy privacy, the neighbors on either side of you only a few scant feet past those trees and bushes—the ones filled with bugs. Maybe those neighbors are doing the same thing. Maybe they're even the same pot-smoking neighbors you thought you'd left behind. And maybe, just maybe, if you're lucky you'll get a late night visit from a certain teenage comedian cum jail-



bird and have hotdogs and bananas for breakfast.

Just have to say here that I really feel for the spring allergy sufferers... and what the hell is snow mould? Anyone?

Spring also means *outdoor* spring cleaning—meaning the dog pooh in the back yard, and peeling back the ten bazillion tons of your big-ass historical tree's last-second-dropped leaves that up until now have been conveniently hidden under four feet of pristine white. And there's also the aroma of spring water in your taps (something akin to dead fish), the city flushing the lines right into your kitchen sink. And who can forget Baseball preseason and the start of car racing, or rather, the time that further reduces normally (non)stimulating conversations to Cro-Magnon like yips and groans inserted between such seasonal favorites as *Where's the hell's the remote?* and *Get out of the way!*

But most importantly, spring brings thoughts of renewal, rejuvenation and hope. So go enjoy it. Stand in that long Safeway line up, dreaming of BBQ and wondering where you put your *Kiss The Chef* apron. And while you're there, don't forget to buy a fly swatter and a bag of hotdog buns. After all, it's spring!



Drewcicle Pie

****WARNING:** *This story contains adult material and may not be suitable for all readers. You've been warned. Now read and don't blame Literary Mary staff for your new fascination with the author of this story. ***

Anyway, this is the story of me, drunk in a gay bar. I thought I would share it, because I'm hungover and I feel like I'm wasting away and when you start wasting away you want to document your life so that when you're gone, when you've been whittled down to fuck all, a piece of you stays behind. That's what we're going for here.

Alright, so why was I at the gay bar? Good question. You're a sly one. Of course I'm straight. But sexual orientation isn't everything, right? If I've got to come clean, I was there for two reasons: one, I love dancing, just letting it go, and that's SO MUCH EASIER when I don't have to worry about preserving my masculinity; two, my dyke friends were there, as they usually are, and let's be honest - I'm in love with nearly all of them, and every now and then one of them will fondle me. That gives me hope.

Yeah, so that's where I am, at this

gay bar. I've been there before, I'm familiar with the etiquette. When a man approaches me for sex in the washroom, I say I'm not interested, or that I'm straight, or E-Slice, the big black drag queen who has decided that (s)he is my protector, will come to my rescue. Or Kayla, the amateur bodybuilder lez who is a regular in my raunchiest fantasies, will insert herself between me and whoever tries to pick me up.

“One another corner - PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS. I couldn't decide whether she fit the bill on this. She was, as I've already mentioned, tiny, almost pubescent. No curves, tiny shoulders, flat as, like, a Jane Austen plot-line.”

She's good like that.

On this particular night, I'm pretty drunk. A bottle of wine, some shots, some beers. When I've had a few too many, I immediately start looking for more. That's the way it is.

So I'm dancing, doing my thing in the corner, amidst a sea of sports bras and bleached blonde faux-hawks. The punk-boi look is hot these days. Then, out of nowhere,

The Sordid Adventures of Strangedaze

this miniscule woman (5'6, gotta be less than a hundred pounds) and her towering male friend approach me.

'We have a bet,' she says. 'He says you're gay. I say you're straight.'

She looks more appetizing than he does, so I say, 'You win.'

She smiles, punches her friend in the shoulder. 'Want to dance?'

'Sure.'

In the span of what appeared to be ten minutes, we went from dancing at an arm's length to our tongues grappling. She tastes like cigarettes. I probably tastes like malt liquor mixed with bile.

She introduces me to a variety of people, including her dealer, who tells me that he'll sleep with me eventually. 'I always do,' he says. Of course, he's like forty and wearing an obscene amount of make-up, and if I were to sleep with a guy it wouldn't be him. And since I don't really do hard drugs he can't ply me with pro bono mounds of coke.

Speaking of coke, this girl starts doing some bumps. Off the thumb. I'm thinking, sheeeit, I don't need

The Sordid Adventures of Strangedaze (cont.)

this. And then she shows me a picture of her kid. Then she starts putting her hand down my pants. My booze-soaked brain attempts to analyze the situation.

There's a triangle. On one corner, DRAMA. This includes:

1. Being a cokehead.
2. Having a child (as a cokehead).

One another corner - PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS. I couldn't decide whether she fit the bill on this. She was, as I've already mentioned, tiny, almost pubescent. No curves, tiny shoulders, flat as, like, a Jane Austen plot-line.

The third corner concerns me - RELATIVE DESPERATION. Has it been awhile since I've been laid? Not really. I have a bisexual girlfriend who is an insatiable sex-fiend and another one who doesn't get out much and consequently puts out at the drop of the hat.

Of course, this side of the triangle should also take into account how ripped I am (very) and what the state of my self-esteem is (meh).

So you have these three corners of the triangle, and they allow you to gauge the situation. In this case, her ambiguous attractiveness, cou-

pled with oodles of drama, added to my stable sense of self-esteem, is enough to subdue my libido.

Thankfully, the femme half of the lesbian couple I came with can barely walk and I'm obliged to help her home. I give my email address to the 90 pounder ('I don't do phones, sweetheart') and fuck off.

A week later she emails me, asks me to come out to the bar.

'It'll be worth your while, *wink wink*,' whatever the fuck that means. I tell her, listen - I'm not big on random sex. STIs are crazy these days, and in retrospect she seems like the type who would stab me in my sleep. But I agree to meet her for coffee,

'But that's it, alright? Just coffee.'

I lied, because I ended up ordering tea, but we didn't fuck. We had a delightful conversation about her job as a counsellor for juvenile sex offenders, how she had a stroke six months ago and is determined to bust out some carpe diem, and how I smell nice. I can't help but notice how much older she looks when her face isn't enveloped in darkness. She touches me every so often, too.

Halfway through our - whatever the fuck we're doing - some greasy guy comes up to us. Apparently he's her dealer and he's trying to make some arrangement whereby she blows him for coke.

'I'll even shower first,' he says.

Why this conversation is happening right before my eyes is beyond me. Needless to say, she has to poise to tell him to fuck off. By the time she turns around, I'm pulling my toque to my eyebrows and sprinting down Dundas.

That was two days ago. Since then, I've gotten countless emails. One offers a no-strings-attached blow-job.

This story doesn't really have a moral. Life's like that, I think.



Party Pie and Other Time-Wasting Goodness

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