

**SPECIAL
POINTS
OF INTER-
EST:**

- **Pete gets in double in this issue with his article and in this month's Ping Pong.**

**INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:**

**Pete's
Piece** 2

Ping Pong! 3

**Hawke's
Sweet
Slice** 7

**Dru's
Carte
Blanche** 8

**Member
Sites** 11

Pie From the Sky

This month's newsletter submission has me sitting at my desk pondering the arrival of my favorite season, which is autumn. Autumn in Oregon is glorious. I've never witnessed autumn anywhere else. During our autumn the trees explode into the most beautiful reds, oranges and yellows. The air takes on a different quality. I swear it smells better and is 45% more energizing and exciting. Everything crackles. I hear in some parts of the world, there isn't really an autumn. The trees don't change colors etc. I mean logically, of course, some places don't even have trees.

I know that Martha Stewart boxes up autumn leaves and mails them to friends who live in places without an autumn. Can you imagine getting a box of leaves from Martha Stewart? What would

you do with them? Does she send a box every year to the same people? Huh. Anyways.

Autumn in Oregon is a beautiful affair which needs to be celebrated, in my opinion. I feel as though I come alive for a bit every time it arrives. I find, though, that I cannot really compose a poem about my love for autumn. I can never do it justice with words. It's more of an overwhelming emotion, an undercurrent of energy, a feeling of bliss. Even Keats' ode to autumn doesn't really cut it for me. It can possibly be captured in photographs, I think. I would love to encounter a piece of poetry which does it justice. I just hate to think that poetry falls short in comparison to photography in this case.

Regardless, there is nothing in comparison

Sweet Words of Pie and Gravy From Your Admins

to experiencing it. That is why I suggest you find yourself a suitable autumn and revel in it if one is not readily available to you. I suggest doing this every year, but at least once in a lifetime. And poets of Literary Mary... if you think you can do it, write about ms. autumn and do her justice, I'd love to read it. I'm not going to lie to you, though. I'm not going to tell you you've captured it when you haven't... but if you do... well, I'd be willing to reward you somehow. I'm not really sure how, as the internet is quite limiting... but perhaps a forum title or something would be in order. At least for the season. The season being autumn... which is my favorite season...

kisses all,
la vodka



Vick, Dog-fighting and You—By Pete

Michael Vick could get up to five years engaging in the act of Dog fighting. Me, personally I find it one of the most heinous, Neanderthal forms of entertainment imaginable. I'm sure someone likes it. After all, he wasn't there by himself.

I don't know. Maybe I'm a wimp.

I'm 6'2" and 210 pounds, but I haven't been in a fight in twenty years. So maybe I need to get out and bite a few ears off or shoot someone in the spine to appreciate it.

Although, five years does seem like a big sentence. You get two years in my state if you get drunk and run someone over. So, I guess the secret is to be drunk. Maybe he could claim he got really drunk and ran over some fighting dogs. Actually portray it as a sort of community service thing.

I wonder how much time he would get for that.

He might only get an O.U.I.
(Operating under the influence).

What if he got drunk and got some fighting dogs and let them behind the wheel in some sort of canine demolition derby of death.

Seat belts be damned! Maybe he could start a trend and even a new sport.

We could get NASCAR drivers to take their dogs with them to work on Sundays. Somewhat of a "Bring your Pet to Work to get Killed in a Car Accident" day. I'm sure the major networks will be beating down the door for that one.

Well, maybe FOX.

In my state of Massachusetts over 700 dogs were killed or injured in the last five years alone. The bastion of blue states, the holy grail of the Kennedy's, the penultimate in Pravda has allowed dogs to be killed while people watch and even place money on them.

It's called dog racing.

(If horseracing is the sport of kings,

what's dog racing? The sport of the King's sadistic, bastard stepchild?)

These dogs get to run around the track till their hearts explode or their bones break while some drunk asshole puts five bucks on the Trifecta. Some die or are put down after a pelvis, leg or skull break. Some are adopted when their days of racing are over, most aren't.

I dunno.

I guess I'm a wimp. I should enjoy this fine sport too.

But, at least Vick didn't pretend what he was doing was killing and torturing dogs. Well, he did lie about it to everyone in the world and an entire section of his family is going to be convicted of it, but he knew exactly what he was doing.

The next time he runs an illegal dog-fighting club, he just needs to be drunk and watching it from the car and he'll be O.K.

Ping Pong!

September 2007

Gary:

The most obvious question would be to ask you why you write, but I tend to steer away from the obvious. I like to dig deeper and find the mysterious instead. So, the starting question, Pete, is why people call you Eggo. Are you particularly fond of that brand of frozen breakfast food, or is there some other meaning to that nickname? What makes a man call himself a waffle?

Pete:

A few years back I purchased Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness. The game came with an instruction manual with pages of things that you couldn't do.

I got really pissed and decided to go to a forum on my son's advice and post a question asking what the hell was wrong with me. In order to join the forum, I had to come up with a user name and "Eggo" was the first thing that popped into my head.

I met a group of people there and joined a group called the Spelling Police. For a few years we wrote free roving stories at five different forums that were a compost of at least 10 people taking the story and writing a few paragraphs and letting it go in any direction.

We wrote some poorly written, bizarre stories that were a lot of fun. But as I wrote these stories, they really ignited a love of writing for me. After a couple of more years, I've pretty much lost touch with those people, but the writing bug is still with me. I use the name as a kind of homage to those early days.

Btw the game was so full of glitches the manual was totally wrong.

I can't ask you how you came up with your moniker, so instead I'll ask the proverbial question instead;

Your stuck in a Newark, New Jersey airport for a week. Name me the three items you would have to have to make it. (toiletries aside, after all it is Newark)

Gary:

Newark airport, huh? I've been there a few times. What I remember about it is standing in line for the security checkpoint for four and a half hours once. The guy in front of me called his wife on the cell phone about every ten minutes, "Hi, honey. Yeah, I'm still in line. I've moved up a little. Call you again in a few minutes." Yes, he really did call her about 25 times during our wait. My son (17 at the time) and I whispered about how we could tackle him and give him a cell phone enema without being shot by the security guards (it was only two months after 9/11). None of that matters for the question, though, does it? Sorry, I run off on tangents all the time.

I assume that the shops, restaurants, and bars would be open too to take care of first and foremost, coffee, then books, then beer, then food – in that order. If not, then I would need about five gallons of coffee – that would probably be a week's supply. But, going back to the assumption that I could buy over-the-counter medical necessities, like coffee, I would have to have the drugs I take to keep me functioning and to prevent me from exploding from blood pressure. Next, I would have to have my laptop computer. And the third thing I would need is my noise canceling headphones (I have all my music loaded onto my laptop).

Needing the prescription medicine is obvious. I might not literally explode, but I would be so miserable in a couple of days that exploding would be a merciful alternative. The laptop is crucial because I can't stand to be away from

the computer for long stretches. If I didn't have a book to read, I could write and I can't do that for very long on paper – it makes me crazy (crazier). I despise writing with a pen on paper. That's what computers are for. And, I've grown to love my noise-canceling headphones. I wear them every day at work, all day long. I am very easily distracted and people talking across the cubicles or phones ringing all over the place can break my train of thought and I have to struggle to get back into what I was working on.

Yes, I'm a coffee addict, but it helped me kick the heroin. Just kidding, it was cocaine. Seriously, I've never done any illicit drugs except for that one time I smoked some hash with a couple of Arabs. But, that's another story (It's called Ahmed of Aramco and you can find it right here at the book table in the back. Thanks for coming, folks. Don't forget to turn on your lights and you drive careful now, you hear?)

And, back to you Pete, you said you wrote some bizarre stories. Do you have any story so bizarre that it makes you shake your head in wonder at yourself? Are you afraid to show it to your family because it will confirm their suspicions about your sanity? If so, give us the gory, freaky details – we won't tell anyone (unless you have a butt-load of money and we want to blackmail you). If not, what is the most bizarre concept you have ever put into a story.

Plus, I promise to be less long-winded in the next reply.

Pete: The thing of it is, most of my stories have a piece of bizarre in them. From my story where a young boy finds God's remote control or a Employment worker gets Death (Mister himself) as a customer to where Aliens

Gary vs. Pete

speak in Balloon Animal.

One strange serial story I wrote with a friend of mine involved a magic stick. The magic stick who be passed back and forth bringing the worse luck imaginable to the recipient. We would write alternating chapters trying to destroy each other. Simplistic, but a lot of fun that took some absolutely strange angles.

I think the bizarre is really all around us and we condition ourselves not to see it.

Think of the headline I saw in today's economic section of the news paper,

"Peanut Butter brand tainted with salmonella earlier this year will soon return to the shelves"

Chances are, I am going to avoid the store selling this stuff.

I can see the workers late at night,

"O.K. everybody's gone, bring the salmonella peanut butter back in."

I have an ongoing list of bizarre, strange sentences or thoughts and then I write a world where they exist.

How about you?

Where do your ideas for stories come from?

Gary: The deep dark recesses of a twisted psyche. I probably write as much non-fiction as I do fiction. The non-fiction usually takes an incident from the time I lived in Saudi Arabia. I think that's because I feel like that is the part of my life that others might find interesting. I live a fairly sedate life now.

The fiction comes from all different directions. I have been entering competitions not necessarily to compete (although I

admit winning a few is good for the ego), but because they set them up with requirements – like a starting or ending phrase and a word limit. That gives me a challenge and gives me the basis for an idea. My stories usually take a twist away from the obvious and incorporate the required phrase in a way the judges weren't expecting.

Much of my writing also comes from curiosity. What would it be like to talk like a mobster? How would a paranoid schizophrenic write this? What about a three year old child? A twelve year old? Can I be arrogant? Annoying? Endearing? I try to put myself into character while I am writing those things and I feel like I learn things about those types of people by what I end up writing.

I've been working on more subtlety and not going for the Oh My God factor so much any more. In earlier writing I wanted to make people cry, laugh out loud, at the end of the story blow their breath out and say, "Wow". Take it to other people and say, "You have to read this". Now, I just try to write a good story.

The poetry is something a little different. If you had told me two years ago I would write poetry, I would have laughed in your face. Almost all the poetry I write is about me. What I do, what I feel, and how I think about something. Kind of narcissistic, isn't it? Even things where I am not the subject of the poem are flavored by how I perceive it.

BTW – I'd like to read that story about the boy finding God's remote control. Sounds interesting.

Pete: More comical, I'll post it in fiction.

Gary: What type of writing really annoys the shit out of you? Not necessarily bad writing – that annoys everyone, but what

style, author, genre, subject – something that you don't like to read and you would flagellate yourself with a steel barbed scourge if you wrote it?

Pete: Very few books have made "the Launch". (The "Launch" is when I get so pissed at a book I throw it across the room and leave it there until it rots.)

Neal Stephenson's first book of the baroque cycle was a pretentious pile of crap. He spent five pages on how they vivisect dogs. What an asshole. It got the launch and has been sitting on the floor of my shed for a year and a half. I occasionally step on it.

I think writing that takes itself so seriously or is more interested in acknowledging the brilliance of the writer instead of making sure the story works is the thing that grates me the most.

Another thing that bothers me is writing where nothing happens, just wandering about. "Fellowship of the Ring" syndrome.

I read the first line of "The Reality Dysfunction" by Peter F Hamilton, (a book I launched)

"Space outside the attack cruiser Beezling tore open in five places."

Huh? The cruiser either tore open space or the space tore open the cruiser. Perhaps the cruiser was driving by and space ripped open (in five places, not three or seven. Apparently space can only tear in odd numbered integers) Perhaps it wasn't outer space, but some other space. Like a rental space or that show Trading Spaces, where people come over and screw up your house.

The next two pages are info dump on how this happened. It did this a few times and then that was enough.

I remember your stories about Saudi Ara-

Ping Pong!

September 2007

bia. Was there ever a time when you said, "Screw this get me on a plane to Cincinnati!"

Side question, I noticed the map in your sig. Fan of Notre Dame.

Gary: I have to pretend to be a fan of Notre Dame. I think they still tar and feather people who live here who aren't fans. Sure, they tar and feather the visitors, but only after they drop obscene amounts of money here on ND game weekends (like \$700 per night for a room at the Marriott hotel – three night minimum).

There was more than one time I said screw this in Saudi and was ready to go on vacation and never go back there. I even had the car packed up with survival supplies and had my disguise ready when we were putting plans together to drive in a convoy to sneak across the border into Abu Dhabi early in Desert Storm. I put up with their shit, though, collected a healthy stack of money when I completed my contract, and laughed at them all the way home.

You don't simply come and go as you please into and out of Saudi Arabia. As soon as you arrive there, you have to surrender your passport to your employer. They have to arrange for an exit visa – which means it is up to them to decide when you can leave the country or not. You can't leave the country without that passport with an exit visa in it.

As an interesting side note, the guy that worked in the passport office at the steel company I worked for couldn't read. He didn't speak English either. I would go to that office, say "Amryki" (Arabic for American) and he would go pull out the box of American passports. He would open them up one by one, hold them up, and compare the picture to my face.

When I grew a beard, he had to bring in someone who could read to help him find mine.

There were times that were tolerable in Saudi. Not when it hit 135 degrees or all those times I had machine guns pointed at me for one thing or another. Then there was the whole being in a war zone with the borders closed while Saddam shot scuds at us. You would think that would be fun, but surprisingly, it wasn't. But taking an ATV across the sand dunes with my 14 year old son was a blast. The beaches were empty because Saudis don't use them, and we had some fantastic times with an entire pristine beach to ourselves. I also learned the art of making beer in a bucket.

Early after arrival, one of the other Americans said, "We're all proctologists here. We work all day with assholes and have to put up with shit." Think about the worst asshole you know. Boil him down, distill him, and you're left with 190 proof assholism. That's the typical Saudi. If there are any Saudis reading this, go away – your goat is horny.

Pete: A friend of mine works with Saudi Arabians and say's the same thing.

Gary: So, what do people do in Cape Cod? I have to admit that's one area I have never been. All I can think of is clam chowder. What are some of your likes and dislikes, favorite foods, and oddities from that neck of the woods?

Pete: Mostly go the beach. We have miles and miles of some of the nicest (Coast Guard Beach in Eastham is in the top ten in the states) beaches around. This also makes for some of the best Surf casting fishing in the world.

There's one spot where you can cast out 50 feet and you are into 200 feet in depth. The whales come in and chase fish right into the shore.

Course, here is pronounced hea , chowder is chowda and tough things are wicked haad. I think people here still harbor all the friendliness of the pilgrims. "Throw another tourist on the stake will ya?"

Enough of the blatant tourism promotion!

My tastes in music are eclectic. Right now I have Duke Ellington, The Dead Kennedy's, Portis Head and Dave Brubeck on my ipod. Makes for a hell of a mix.

What kind of music do you listen to Gary?

Gary: You might use eclectic to describe my taste in music too. You might also use the word random. I've been listening to Meatloaf's "Bat out of Hell III" quite a bit lately. I mix that with some Styx, Queen, a collection of Hymns, Enya, Barbershop, Beethoven, Mozart, Southern Gospel, Trans Siberian Orchestra, Blink 182, and Josh Groban.

There are certain elements of music that make me like it. I like definable melodies, good tight harmony, love a mixture of orchestration behind rock, and I am a sucker for key changes and a rousing finish. Techno has an appeal of its own.

What I listen to depends on my mood, or what I want my mood to be. Sometimes I want to be moved, sometimes soothed, at others escape into heavy

Gary vs. Pete

beat, mind numbing, play the drums with my hands on the steering wheel, loud, loud music.

I've been doing this online writing forum thing on a few different sites for about a year and a half now. What attracts you to this and what parts of it might repel you?

Pete: Man, that is a hellava mix.

I started to on the sites about the time you did. Before I started submitting and critiquing work on forums, I was really a bad writer. At least technically anyways.

I collected straight D's in English through high school, doing just enough to get by and never really tried writing for thirty years after. I like sharing on the forums because it gives you a huge, diverse audience to share your work with and get honest, relevant feedback.

I can't tell you how many times a first-time poster gets thoroughly trounced in a crit and says, "Thanks! The only feedback I could get was from my friends and they all thought it was the best thing they ever read."

On the obverse,

The thing that repels me the most is the people who decided to write a novel. They haven't written flash or short stories or novellas yet, but they are going to dive right in and write that life changing book.

So they post the first "chapter". You read it and it is a fucking train wreck. You name it, it's wrong.

Then you have to gently steer them in the best way to improve their writing, like starting off with flash, short stories or novellas and they proceed to tell you that the book is already written and they don't really want to change much because it's all done.

But I can't think of a better venue to improve your writing skills.

The worst story I ever wrote was probably the one about a guy who finds himself in a war with ants. It was a good story idea that I rushed and screwed up.

What was the worse story you've ever written?

Gary: I went through a romance phase a few years back and that was some god-awful stuff. Thank God I didn't get involved with any online writing forums until I got that out of my system. Egad, I had things like, "heaving bosom", "throbbing heart", and, I kid you not - "swooning soul".

I understand what you're saying about some young writers diving right into a full length novel. They say that everybody has a novel in them. Everybody has a liver in them too, so not everything in a person should come out. I call that the difference between could and should. It's like with young men whose beard is starting to come in. So many of them will grow their sideburns long. Kind of a status symbol – look at me, I'm post pubescent now. They haven't yet learned the difference between could and should.

Then, you have the self-deprecators. "I know I can't write and this is really crap, but I thought I'd post it anyway so if you think its crap too, that's all right." I usually don't even read anything with a preface like that because it usually really is crap and since they already knew that, no need for me to confirm it. They usually get what they want, though, and someone replies, "No, this isn't crap at all. You have a good start here." What they want to say, but don't is: just change every word, find a plot, check your spelling, proofread, learn how to use punctuation, don't make every other

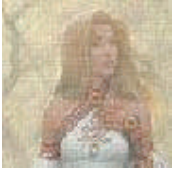
paragraph a flashback, try to avoid flash forwards, and get rid of all those flash sideways. They end with, "Do some proofreading and you'll have a good story. Keep writing."

That brings us to a logical progression in topics, television and movies. The only thing I will watch on network television now is, House. I have a DVR so I record it and watch it after it airs so I can skip commercials. I DVR everything now. If something comes on that I want to watch, I hit record and go watch something I already recorded.

I'm addicted to the Food Network. That and The Learning Channel, Discovery Channel, Science Channel, and the History Channel. I don't watch much sports but will put an occasional football game on.

In movies, my all time favorite movie is Empire of the Sun. In a close second is, O Brother Where Art Thou. Other movies at the top are Amadeus, Armageddon, The Fifth Element, and The Ten Commandments. I'm almost embarrassed to admit that a couple of my favorite movies are, The Princess Bride and The Never Ending Story.

And, now since they want to get this to the newsletter editor, I'll bring this month's ping-pong to a close. Its been interesting chatting with you, Pete. Sorry if I rambled on with my replies, but when I get to typing, I don't know when to stop.



I spotted a picture in a liquidation store that I knew would be perfect for my living room. It wasn't just any old picture of course. This was a huge and very expensive-looking picture. A double-matted and double framed picture. One of those pictures you see in houses of substantial wealth (not that mine is). One of those pictures that weighed ten tons as well. And the price?—you ask. \$30. Oh please. Heavy or not, it was in my Jeep so fast I barely remember putting it there... and when I got home, I had a heck of a time trying to get it out. But out it came, and down the old pictures came, and up the new picture went. Then, the fun started, which was pretty much exactly like what I call "Living Room Writing." Let me explain.

The first draft of a work is easy. Okay, so maybe it isn't easy, but it is easier than what comes after (to me, at least). The first draft is allowed to be weird and wonderful and full of flowery this-'n-thats that don't quite add up or even tie together in any way, kind of like my pre perfect pictured living room. But that's okay. In fact, it's perfectly normal. That's why it's called a *first draft* and not a *finished work*. It's what comes later that's a killer. Oh, you'll read and hear tons about how to edit your work. But to put it in the simplest terms, you have to change from writer to cut-throat, black marker-

Hawke's Sweet Slice

Living Room Writing

slashing, mean as heck and 'leave-no-word/phrase-untuned' editor. In other words, you have to do "Living Room Writing." Yep, you gotta. Everyone does. I read somewhere that Jane Austen did something like twenty-five revamps of *Pride and Prejudice* before subbing it. Twenty-five! And that's without the help of a computer, folks.

To find inspiration to revamp ("Living Room Writing")... well, anything, all you need do is change one thing. Any thing. Take my new picture for instance. It looked lovely. It looked stunning. It looked amazing... unlike the rest of the living room. So out came the garbage bags and in went everything that didn't fit with it, which was a lot.

Gone were the massive baskets full of horse magazines and miscellaneous what's-its. Gone were the knickknacks on the ledge. Gone were the beige lampshades, exchanged for the stored powder blue ones. Gone were the throw blankets, as well as anything else no longer fitting, previously perfect or not. The picture was, in a sense, the theme or framework of the room. The extras were all the things the room could do without. What I did here was de-cluttering (edit) the room (the work) right down to its bare essentials (theme) and then strategically place (rework/revamp) what was needed, and where. And you know what? It worked (read) far



better because of it.

Speaking of a revamping (and in keeping with the "change one thing" I seem to be going with here)...

I'm one of a small group currently taking part in the Erotica course via the Piggly Wiggly section of Literary Mary. This got me thinking about what I like to write, which is Historical Fiction, as opposed to what I'm writing now, which is Fiction. Of course, that led to thoughts about Romance in general. Not that I'm talking Harlequin Romance novels (though there's nothing wrong with them). What I am talking about though is Historical Romance... which is sort of along the same lines, isn't it? Marketable commercial success isn't the reason (I've had some success already). Money isn't the reason either (though money is nice). The real reason is the love of it, to write what I want to write about. To write what I enjoy reading myself. But I digress.

Write what you want to write about. Write what turns your crank and lifts your spirit. Then make a copy (that's very important in case you edit too heavily) and do your own mean-ass "Living Room Writing." Your work, like my living room, will be far better for it.



Carte Blanche: Where's my fuckin' oppression, huh?

Meet Hank. Twenty two years old, hails from a ten kilometer square of two story suburban houses. His mother drives and SUV. The Beamer in the driveway belongs to his father and the mid-life crisis that has recently bubbled to the surface. Hank has curly blonde hair, the kind of hair you see in pictures of Victorian England, and if he exposes his soft, supple white skin to the sun for more than ten minutes without proper protection, he metamorphoses into a lobsterian figure of the carnivalesque.

Hank's girlfriend is similarly white to the point of near translucence, but she has a nice body and breasts to die for. Lord knows, if I wasn't averse to homewrecking and if Hank wasn't a good friend of mine, I'd be all over that like burnt crack crystals are all over my neighbour's porch.

Anyway, Hank's a writer. We're part of the same university clique. He talks a lot about aesthetics in that vague Wildean sense. His penchant for abstraction irritates the hell out of me, but I suspect my libidinous ways reminds him of the dubious Henry Miller, a man whose writing he's called 'insipid tripe' on

several occasions.' So we call it even.

Hank got into our writing collective a bit later than me. He just got accepted into the über-competitive creative writing course, the one where a hundred apply and twenty-four get in. He's one of five males accepted. LG, the course's legendary professor, told me at lunch that he only wanted three of those males, but nothing fucks with a coterie's dynamic more than a gender chasm. He also told me that Hank was one of the two guys who actually measured up to the gals in talent. Good work, Hank.

The other day, me and Hank hit up the local Fringe Festival. Artists clogged the street, painting pictures of Bush fucking Troll dolls. Musicians beat their bongo drums, beat poets recited their jivey paeans to an era that no longer exists. None of these things interested me. I'm all about the writin', ladies and gents, which is why we found ourselves in a drippy little bar next to an independent theatre that went tits up three years ago.

Here there is your usual motley assortment of writer archetypes: the James Joyce clone, replete with walking stick and straw hat; the aging, leather skinned homosexual

male who reads stories about the twink he fell in love with the other day, the one who won't love him back because his penis can't resist the pull of gravity; the self-proclaimed 'undiscovered talent' who write about carnivals in the exact same manner as every other sleazy whore who gave blowjobs for free rides. She seems oblivious to the fact that her entire story has the linguistic gusto of the nutritional information of a Corn Flakes box, that the entire premise of her story mirrors that hip Bikini Kill song my partner's been listening to incessantly.

But we're really here to hear my nemesis / sometimes lover / former girlfriend of my current partner, Megan, read. She welcomes me with a hug, tells Hank it's nice to meet him, then goes off on a spiel about how we first met and fucked.

Megan (to someone not Dru): You know, this celibacy thing's been really working for me. I feel empowered.

Dru (drunk): What? Fuck you.

Megan: Excuse me?

Dru: Want a drink?

Carte Blanche

Megan: Um, okay...?

Dru: You know, I've seen you around. I've always thought you were this rude feminist nazi lesbian bull dyke.

Megan: I am one.

Dru: Oh. Bummer. About the celibacy thing too.

Megan: Want to fuck?

Dru: Okay.

The end. Anyway, Hank finds this tale amusing, questions its validity.

'Man, nothing like that ever happens to me,' he laments.

At last year's fringe festival, Megan read a piece of flash about a guy who's penis is so miniscule he blows his brains out. Before heading to the mic, she dedicated it to me. It was cute. This time, when she goes on stage to read her brand of aggressive psycho-erotica, the poem's about my partner's cunt. Nothing I haven't heard before. She dedicates it to me and for the first ten lines of the poem, everyone thinks it's about me. Until she starts talking about B-cup breasts. Then all bets are off.

We eventually leave, me and Hank.

Megan kisses me on the cheek and I wish her luck on her latest writing venture - an MFA at one of the most prestigious universities in the country.

'By Hank,' she says. 'Cute hair.'

On the way home, Hank, one too many beers in him, cracks.

'Jesus, Dru, there's fucking nothing for me.'

what do you mean, Hank?

'It's like, Megan can write about being fucking poor, gay, a woman, feminism. What do I have? The fucking suburbs and this privileged fucking life.'

I see, I see.

'It's like, my experiences will never be as noteworthy as hers. She's marginalized. Me? What've I got to be pissed about? Nothing. Where's my oppression?'

As ridiculous as Hank's diatribe sounds, I've thought the same thing. In a world where straight white males make the world go round and round, I've found myself in some kind of twilight zone. My female friends are either dykes, feminists, or both. My male friends 40 / 60 % gay to straight. My academic research interests are in gen-

der. It's like, the world's turned itself inside out.

L, my partner, takes me to feminist meetings. I can dig being the token phallus. I'm schooled in the nuances of feminist theory. I know how to nod my head and smile. And these gals, they accept me, want to hear my opinion. It helps that I've been fucking their demi-urge in loving cohabitation for four years. I've got street cred in that sense. But I still get the impression that I will forever be speaking from the subject position of the privileged, that my views will always come with the same semiotic qualifier that quote 'marginalized' groups have when dealing with the rest of the world.

Am I wishing oppression upon myself? No ma'am, not on your life. Am I lamenting not being taken seriously at times because I'm a straight white middle class male? Maybe, but y'know - unlike Hank - I'm okay with that.

When I was in second year, I wrote a story. It was about this unnamed island and globalization and tattoos. I thought the premise was kind of neat and it was pretty nifty, in a magic realist kinda way. It was so snazzy, in fact, that it was my best shot at one of the two creative writing

Carte Blanche

awards offered at my school. Some pretty successful writers have won those awards, and even cracking the honorable mention list would go a long way to giving my CV some legitimacy.

So I was editing this piece ruthlessly. It was making its rounds, getting scrutinized by the usual cluster of workshop-folk. And then it came into the hands of a gal whose major is anthropology.

The shit hit the fan.

Amongst the things I was accused of was appropriating a marginalized culture and exploiting it with no actual knowledge of said culture, save for what I made up.

Ah, but angry lady, the island has no name. It was entirely fabricated. How can I be appropriating something that doesn't exist?

'That's even worse, you dolt. It's like you're lumping all these unique cultures together in one faceless island. It's sick.'

I was speechless. The piece, it became my hidden shame. It was probably the best thing I'd written at the time, but like an illegitimate child who's sweet but nonetheless the product of evil, I just couldn't love it.

My submission for the writing award came down to two: the island story, and this bizarre, really aggressively-masculine semi-autobiographical story about kids who shoot themselves with pellet guns and wax homosocial. According my anthropological friend, this story was more 'authentic' and should be my choice, since it's based on experiences I've had in the lower rungs of middle-classhood.

Of course, it wasn't likely to win any awards. It was good, but dark and dirty and kind of masturbatory. In the end, I sent the island story in and, lo, that April it was announced I'd won the award. Exhilaration, yes, and a bit of queasiness. So the best thing I wrote was vile and exploitative. Don't I feel peachy.

The award winner was announced at our professor's house, where we were partying to celebrate what had been a very successful creative writing year for our class. Drunk, I called my mom and told her I'd won. But by the end of the night, I was sulking by myself, nursing a bottle of Bambino next to the flaky pastries in the kitchen.

'So, congratulations,' el Professor said. 'There were a lot of good pieces submitted for that award.'

'Yeah? Mad wicked, holmes.'

'Uh oh - you don't resort to the bas-

tardized homie vernacular unless something's bother you. What's the matter?'

After topping off my wine glass, which was really a mug that said 'Number One Dad!', I spilled the beans. LG listened thoughtfully, nodding.

'I see. Is that all?'

I sighed. 'That's all.'

'Dru, I'm only going to say this once. Writers, they're liars. Every act you do as a writer is one of appropriation. Is it exploitative? You bet your ass it is. I've written about friends, about my family, and I've alienated many people close to me. Was you story believable? I think so, and so did the award panel of judges. THAT is what writing's all about.'

And then told me that the girl in anthropology was just pissed because she was going for the same award. That made me giggle.

So to Hank and the oppression he so desperately seeks I say 'fuh' - flex your imaginative muscles, you lazy suburban piece of shit. Fuck your privileged existence. When you write, do it with a carte blanche. And most of all, when some brazen hussy from anthropology accuses you of being exploitative, get drunk at a writerly function and throw up in her shoes.

Member Websites and Blogs

*listed alphabetically



Blogs from the War Room—ckm's blog commenting on everything from movies, people, and literature, to what should be the next line of Hallmark cards.

Hawke's View—Hawke's personal blog. A blog about this, that, and the other thing. Oh, and writing too.

I've laid my dreams...—Kagechaos' blog documenting the day-to-day of life and the evil of Wal-Mart and working there.

I've laid my dreams...(site)—Kagechaos' website with links to all his spaces around the web as well as his comic Black vs. Pencil.

Murderous Musings—Murdershewrote's blogs filled with her ever amusing ponderings about life.

Write Anyway—Silver's site full of writing prompts put to a theme that changes weekly.

Do you have a website or blog you would like advertised here? Let Silver know via PM and your site will show up in the next issue.