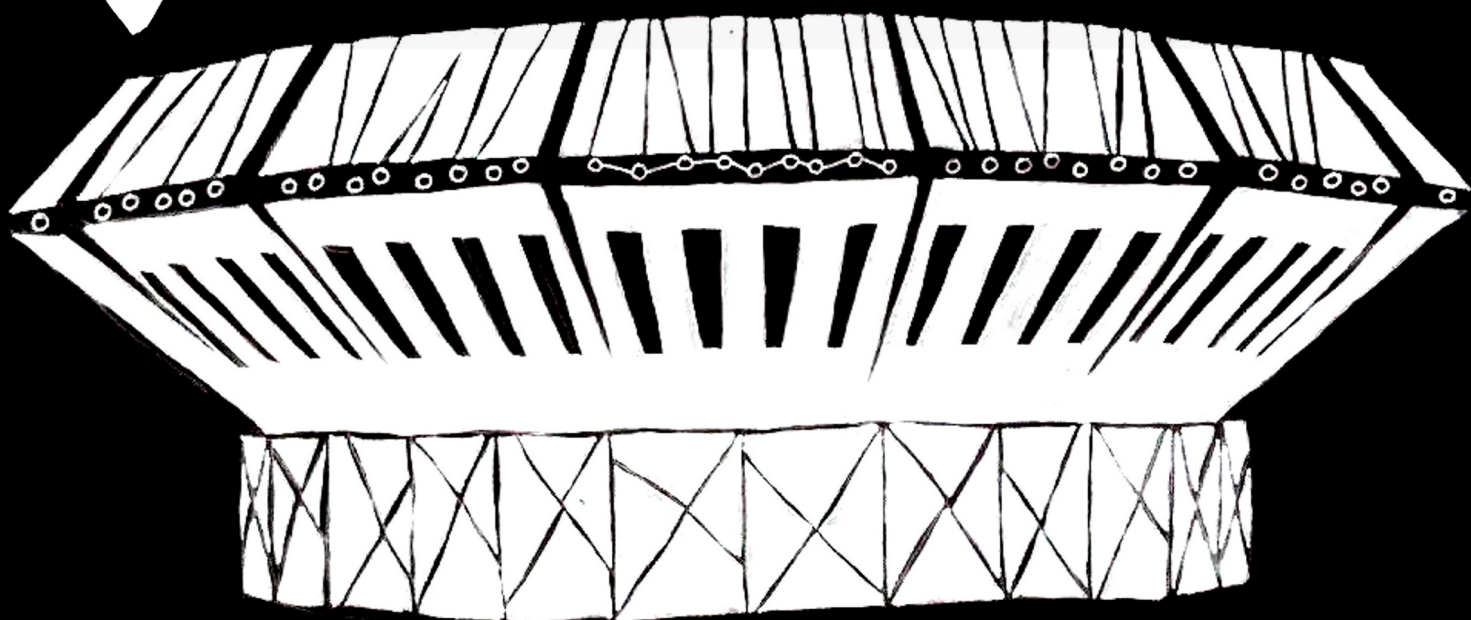


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Used Gravitrons



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Editors Note

Compiling this first issue of Used Gravitrons, I've enjoyed dwelling on the confused smiles exchanged while on the ride when the skin of my lips and cheeks would pull back to expose my molars and the height of my gums. I've remembered the strange delighted confusion that I stumbled in for hours after the ride.

Try and explain the appeal of being forced into the wall of a machine that smells like gasoline, onion rings and sweat. Add to that a reputation for spinning apart or ejecting children on loose panels. The content of this issue represents our attempt. It is all at once disconcerting, bizarre, happy, noisy and hilarious.

To everyone who has made it possible, thank you.

- Shea Newton

In the Beginning

- *James Welch*

The words were first spoken in the upstairs of the Annex. Two pitchers of Terminator Stout, one of Ruby Red, and a couple of packs of blues. "A used Gravitron! We've got to get ourselves one!" The idea was planted. From there we decided one would not be enough, but a train of interconnecting Gravitrons. A hall of presidents, with ferrets and weasels as the live in residents. The idea of getting a train with a few boxcars seemed easy enough. Drive a hundred miles or so on an interstate and there is an old locomotive, rusted, with at least eight cars which haven't seen the tracks in years. The framed portraits for the hall of presidents could be gathered easy enough from any statehouse, border crossing, government building, gun or gold store. This left the Gravitron. We had no idea where we could wrangle up any Gravitrons, let alone a single Gravitron. So we furthered the plans of "The Hall of Presidents" McKinley would have a constant stream of ferrets flowing through his mouth, Wilson would have laser beams of weasels shooting from his glasses, and a black-light portrait of Van Buren.

It's been three years since the plan for a train of Gravitrons was proposed, and alas, one has been found. It will not be sitting on a nine car train, there will be no door controlled by hydraulic pumps, there's no D.J. in a center circle hyping up the crowd on this Gravitron. We've found a slightly used Gravitron, low miles, strong bearings, and the ability to be towed or placed inside an 88 Volvo wagon. This is a slightly different ride without the side effects which may include, diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, nose bleeds, child birth, and death. Hopefully.

Aside, anywhere

- *Nathan Moody*

I like to think
of
1950's Russia
small dog children
bomb facades
toiletry displays

A corp of engineers
making blueprints
of freckled hands.
yours.
Detergent.

As we drift through
aisles of familiar Lysol,
perfume calcifying lungs

as we shuffle the cart.
One wheel dyslexic
gyrates

grinds out a tune,
and rifts a mirror floor
into reflections of toddler-hood.

A hand, my hand
goes for broke
into the center
of your back.

A smear of spun honey
onto churning muscle.

bulk spaghetti tendons
that link spinal
cans of albacore.

I wish it were
Antelope season.
there would be a buck

grazing near the deli.
The shopping list
in your hand
a blind.

I wish it were any season
here. megamart
somewhere.

A Short Film Starring Shelly Duvall and Stephen Gere

- *Stephen Gere*

He knocked on the door. There was music playing inside. He recognized the song and began fidgeting to it a little. The door opened and she stood there for awhile.

"Can I come in?" he said.

Her eyes fell as she turned to the bathroom to continue with some beautification. He followed her to the mirror. They both watched her brush her hair.

"I'm tired of this," she said.

"Me too," he said. His eyes passed from her hair down one of her arms, to her hips.

She continued, "Every time we try to talk you say the same things. I can't change any of that."

"I say those things in self-defense," he said.

"From me?" she asked.

"Well it's like a preemptive defense, you know? I realize I'm an asshole but I'm only trying to protect myself."

"I'm sick of all your excuses."

"I'm not justifying myself. I'm just saying how it is."

She walked to the bed and laid down staring at the ceiling. "I don't know anymore," she said.

He put his hands in his pockets and hovered over her. He nervously glanced around the room.

"I've got to get out of this town," he said. "It's just so incestuous...everyone has their head up everyone else's asses. I've got to catch the bus."

"Bye," she said as she rolled onto her side.

"Bye," he said, already walking down the stairs.

One Fiction

- *Bill Gates*

My grandma on my mom's side never spoke to me directly about her sexual orientation, she was raised in a Mormon family and has a deep faith in it, but my grandmother being born a lesbian had us all in for a wild ride. She married a man I never really got to know but none-the-less became my grandpa (I'm not sure if he's Mormon). Together they made my mom my aunt my aunt and my uncle, in part (I think) because of grandma's not feeling safe to come out of the closet. This continues to blow my mind, that I wouldn't be here had it not been for the oppressive nature of the Mormon church. Or maybe grandma just wanted a big family to love (which she does). Another strange thing about my being here is that my parents were swinging with another couple in Montana on the night of my conception. The size of sperm is incredible and the other dude's juice musta mixed at least a little bit with my father's. I remember my mom telling me that on the night of my conception she tried to wash all the sperm out then she'd say, "But you were strong". I'm a complete accident.

The purpose of this series of photographs is to serve as an ode to the days of beepers and starter jackets, drug deals and most of all, pay phones. The act of paying by coin to place a single call will not make a come back, it will not resurge with exaggerated nostalgia like vinyl and Volvos. Soon, pay phones will be gone forever. My experience with this project is that they are already becoming hard to find. To pay phones, I say goodbye and good riddance, you will be gone but not forgotten.

Regards,

Eamonn Parke











Homie Don't Play That

- *Keith Zimmerman*

When I was a small boy growing up, I thought that athletes, superheroes and Bible characters were all the same. John Elway and Captain America, for me, held the same basic appeal: watching Cap' and the Invaders fight off the Nazi scourge to protect the USA and the world at large was almost as exciting as watching Elway slice and dice a tough Raiders defense to preserve the Broncos' spot in the playoffs. The only thing more miraculous than Moses parting the Red Sea was Michael Jordan's famous dunk from the free throw line.

How the blending of these respective mythos occurred is still unclear to me, and if my parents attempted to clarify my perspective, I don't remember. Perhaps the clearest example of this interdisciplinary integration was the ice cream bucket that contained the clippings I cut from comics, newspapers and illustrated Bibles (that my mom let me defile Bibles in this manner still surprises and shocks me now). I arranged the cut-outs on butcher paper, glued them down, and made comics out of the pre-existing images (I would later draw comics for years and years). I was a kid, and the belief that men could turn one loaf of bread into many, score nine points in six seconds or shoot laser beams from their eyes was thrilling. I probably wouldn't have responded to any clarification anyway.

By the time junior high and puberty hit, team sports held less and less interest for me. This was partly because my teammates in football began to ostracize me for skateboarding and my skater friends hated that I played football, partly because the Denver Broncos lost three Super Bowls in four years (all by abysmally, embarrassingly wide margins), and partly because I was getting high a lot. Like most kids that age, I felt I had to lay a stake, define who I was, and that was largely accomplished through a series of choices I probably thought of as 'growing up' at the time. Glenn Danzig and the Misfits replaced John Elway and the Broncos (*cough*). The Punisher and Longshot seemed less interesting than R Crumb and Daniel Clowes. I no longer believed in God.

The focus of my idolatry had shifted to artists.

I will never, ever, forget the theme song for the NBA on NBC. Those horns and synthesizers were indelibly tattooed in my soul sometime in high school, when pro basketball became my secret Saturday and Sunday morning sanctuary. Amazing Grace and Scooby Doo theme song be damned. Remember when it was Shaq and *Penny*? Rik Smits and Reggie? Gary Payton and Rainman? Ahmad Rashad. Bob Costas, Peter Vescey and Marv Albert (the greatest announcer, without question, of all time) were apostles, spreading the good word. "YES! A FACIAL! It counts, AND ONE!"

Music, drugs, drawing and skateboarding filled the rest of my week, and these things seemed to go together, seemed of a piece, and were thought of as being cool, I guess, among my friends. I mean, I might've argued about the artistic merits of the Ramones as opposed to the Velvet Underground (Lou Reed and John Cale equal Shaq and Kobe, by the way, and Andy Warhol is Phil Jackson), but no one would call me out for actually *liking music*. I never talked to my friends about sports (nor did I tell them that I loved OMD or the Cure) because I realized that it was one thing to be outcast by the jocks I played football with, but quite another to be *outcast by outcasts*. But it was the same thing, really: I didn't play music, I didn't play sports, but I got lost in these worlds and felt like I was a part of them. I listened to and watched and fetishized the players/ teammates/ bands/ teams/ conferences/ genres/ stars etc. ad infinitum. Let me tell you, the New York Knicks in 1995 were just as scary and dangerous as the New York Dolls in 1975.

Anyway, this explanation by way of autobiography may be unnecessary. Ever since Dennis Rodman, with his hair and tattoos, basketball players are more punk rock than punk rock. People tell me that the best high school skaters are now the popular kids in high school. So things have changed.

Carmelo's dunks give me faith in man, Bobby Womack's voice allows me to believe in God.

Really, how many loaves of bread is that?

Guests

- *Nathan Moody*

It has been years
since the patio
held seats.

Timid, I want hanging lights in the trees.
paper Japanese globes
thin paper shades.

On the fence wobble children's faces
hoping for color in the elm.

Two Fictions

- *Bill Gates*

1.

Too close for discomfort: I control other people cause a space ship is controlling me, the space ship knows this cause I know this. What the U.F.O exists by is unwanted fear. I know this because I've been given no choice but to want any fear that appears in me. Other people who are afraid of fear are quite common because love (being the opposite of fear) feels nicer but cannot exist (being the opposite of fear) w/out fear. It's all one's and zero's until I find the U.F.O. to be identifiable as nothing. Knowing nothing doesn't matter is like saying matter is nothing. I found this out when the U.F.O. turned out to be "Satan" the rebel angel who wants love to stop lying about it's existence, and he's any dog that got kicked by man and decided to bite back. I'm out of control because nothing's in control, but nothing only knows itself by something, so could be nature (including U.F.O.'s) is in control.

Every time I say fuck I know that freedom is a four letter word.

2.

1st there was fear then god decided not to be afraid of her self and in that moment is the virgin birth of mystery mystery doesn't think its god because it finds itself unpleasant one day mystery turned into knight to see if itself and this very moment is forever finding out that theres no reason to fight itself that fear is perfect from now on and never only finds itself

Dream

- *Bruce Connors*

1.

Digress all the way back up the mountain

My whole life is bullshit

Filling up crevasses and couloirs

Nickel and diming me to death

A brief vignette of something I'd like you all to know:

2.

To the last great Altas

Giles Corey lies under a pile of stones

Panting, crushed. We sat on his chest to smother him.

First we burned up Joan of Arc & called her heretic

Later we made her a saint.

3.

Caralina forgot where her inhaler was
Had an asthma attack, drowned in her lungs
She won't make that mistake again.
One half of death is forgetting to be alive

4.

A freshly plucked chicken, a hangman's noose
Alliterations, anti-aircraft fire, arts & crafts
Autumn falling out stumbling
Rickshaw, rope, angles, vices, radar, rules, gore

5.

I'd like to tell you a universal truth
I'd like to tell you a lot of things
I'd like to talk to you from inside a column of fire
I'll have you taxidermied and use you as
A door stop.

6.

The results of the tests are not good
Said the doctor while making a left hand turn
His cell phone beeps, low battery, a mild oath
A return to the start of prudence
Doctors lie to make you seem better
But you can taste death from far away.

7.

When we find out who's at the door
Crestfallen we turn away while
Little lights blink blue and white
The sky's orange & pregnant
With snow.

8.

While composing at Lascaux
Out the entrance I threw down the brush
The perspective, the shade, the nuance,
the je ne sais quoi. As an artist and a caveman
I wanted to really capture the mammoth

9.

Expensive cocktails, wine, juice, blood
Hang-ups, glass condoms, pubic lice
CD cases, Deutscher keywords
Wigs for clowns with tumors, memorial
Locketts stuffed with hair, a drizzle of caramel
On a toasted almond crust.

10.

Not long after the cat got AIDS, he
Stopped grooming himself, ordered pay-
Per-view knowing deceased he would not pay back
Faster then the atoms that make up superman
He grew content, bloated, liquefied, burst, decayed.
Itemized deductions, the master thought:
Meanwhile the cat mastered being dead.

11.

We called him Guapo Pendejo
He was a good friend, which made it
All that much more difficult to testify against him.

Two Poems

- *Matt Hayes*

Take pages and sip iced sip
And freeze that word chasm still.

Find that eye sore:
Eye spot:
Third eye in the worn-bottom khaki pocket.
Wait for the eighth bar and slumber:
Wake: via whiskey-splash on the brass apple under your chin.

Meanwhile, tapping that tumorstick on the edge of your urn.

Sit and sulk about the foil baggage.
Hold your breath and breathe.
Wring around the possible anchor,
Downstream and soaking.

Ready, stamp out, hold out, kill.
Settle in and fill out.

Wrestle with down-tempo roots, sift through it.
Rumble.
Rough up the silk screen with yellowrusted fingers

With it, crumble, shock value, handle.
Electric candle holds the smoke stack mantra.

Spill it.

Six Beers, One Draft, Improvised Fiction

- *PA Valle*

Beer #1

The blackened fireproof box was the only thing that had survived besides Helen. According to the fireman everything else had been beyond salvageable. Marooned as time and circumstance had chosen, she stopped at a Rite-Aid on the way to her motel to purchase a key for the lock which held her from the last remnant of her son.

It took over an hour and two stoic bangings from the adjacent room to hammer away the lock. The first item in sight was a baggie filled with marijuana. Directly beneath the baggie were some upside-down photos of a homely teenage girl in front of a mirror, a camera in hand and skivvies that would have covered a girl half her size. Beneath the photos lay a little auburn book. Helen halted her hand for a moment concerned with dishonoring the dead, then she allowed her hand to plunge to make up for wasted discretion.

Beer #2

Our small boat moved through what seemed like a silent sewer. The walls were lit with a soft green as if our silent city had complained of rape on our golden brick roads. I could feel her skin and hair caress me from across the boat. Why she had allowed me to come in the first place I wasn't sure. There had never been any question that she deserved better. At least someone with more conviction or a thicker moral thread.

We never moved for hours as the small brick sidewalks played a monotonous tune for for our eyes. Had they been less droll I could have stolen more looks upon her. I can no longer remember her true image but only the feeling of her presence.

As if we had never been alone the boat shook with ripples in the water that turned to knobs covered in scales. In a single motion we jumped from the boat to the blackened-

green bricks and were running up steep stairs in a thin corridor towards a room as a window. Upon arrival we were ecstatic to find a wooden door, and sat with the assurance of its click of defense. We shivered with warmth staring at the ground, allowing the small room to grow with our shortened breath. Our eyes had drifted together towards the door and its gap at the bottom that grew with acknowledgement.

Our hearts hastened with the click of claws on the brick staircase. Malicious breath was forced into the room making way for the nostrils and teeth that pushed it as the gap grew. In frenzied despair we threw milk crates toward the gap to quell the flood of pursuit. The gap was satiable and gave up as soon as we had fed it our assistance.

Before I had seen eyes or a head I felt the tail of the assailant shrink the tiny room to a closet. Unsure if it was my own hand or hers there was contact made with a body of scales and a silent scream. Before the beast had time to fall it was climbing the stairs to our milk crate cage.

Beer #3

It had started with her milky skin running from the portcullis. Her mother soon stormed past my lawn chair into the open side door. I had known the outcome without even knowing myself. There was a gunshot followed with clumsy silence. My roommate did not exit and I wished for the shaded step of the the door to remain as it was as I decayed into ether with regret. I could have stopped her, I knew her fate, now I couldn't even control my own.

When the two dimensional figure appeared at the base of the driveway I knew we would be jumping the broken fences we found in abandoned fields. Sometimes it was quicker to kick our way through the rotten wood than to heave ourselves over the giant privacy of voles and feral cats. The sharp edges of our shaded black and white pursuer seemed to manifest itself inches behind our escape with sadistic glee.

My moral threads had led me here, where I would chase freedom forever until I perished unfulfilled. There was some point where I could have chosen to stay in my lawn chair. I could have told her that he was out. I could have tried to ask her out and

we could have gotten on our bikes and ridden away. Maybe if I had quelled her mother with false stories to buy my conscience time, I could be swimming oceans rather than leaping in an endless desert of fields, searching for a plank of wood to reveal a way to change the past. This figure was our future and my roommate was remorseless. He was my catalyst. He was my excuse to mourn. So why couldn't I escape myself?

Beer #4

When they imposed a tax on the emissions I left while chasing her shadow, I switched to a bicycle. Even though my pace had slowed her shadow remained in sight. It had always stayed just within sight. As I turned the corner of the shaded suburban block I would catch her turning, leading me to her. It wasn't parasitic as they claimed, without me she wouldn't have existed. We were symbiotic. I knew I knew she needed me, or else she would have sped off, or else she would have stopped completely to tell me she didn't care.

How the sun was always setting I never knew or questioned. I just assumed that sepia was our color, a mood she chose, and a mood I'd loved before I'd known emotion. Through thin veneers we played this game. Had she stopped or ran off I would have ceased and never known desire.

In a dream I remember riding side by side with her and her skin had painted the sky summer. The ache I felt in life was gone and she was existence. To stop, slow, or speed up was suicide. As we rode together I could feel her hair envelop my body with warmth. Church bells rang as we rode through bell towers and guffawed at futility. I no longer existed, but was her existing.

To awake to have to chase her again was a hell, but to let her die was suicide. If I couldn't bask in her warmth then I must chase for the chance to continually pass in her setting.

We covered the world in laps of our suburban desert. No one was ever present and our future and present never existed. We rejoiced in solace. Her shadow is my last image. I don't remember who stopped first, or if we both perished.

Beer #5

My first memory is of my brothers. We were only related through shadowed blood. The noise of the calamitous horde was progressing from the front of the stair to the stockroom we were holed in. We were lucky that the only entrance was from the alley way in back. This comfort was washed away with the horde's community effort to surround. We had been sheathed under the guise of an orphanage, but the blood loss had led to questions which led to rage.

Our creator had fled, leaving children in the wake of his ebbing destruction. We sat motionless waiting for the savior we had come to expect. Either someone spoke up or we unanimously decided it was time to flee and in regimented action we stood as a collective. Our skin pale as our outlook, and veins as thin as our chance we spread amongst the crates waiting for one to tip the scales. In response to the fists beating on the steel door it swung from a shadowed wind and we pushed forward through the crowd. All of us able scaled the outside brick walls to the roof, followed by fear. We leapt in pursuit of freedom that was pursued by a veiled guarantee of failure.

I don't remember when when my arm had fallen to myself, but it suddenly felt as if it had always been. Fanged teeth and the lust for progress now felt sophomoric and futile. I leapt from rooftop to rooftop the perpetual escapee. I felt the shingles beneath my claws shift from tar to brick to sand, and before I could breathe I was gripping the wire of a cage which stood miles high. Waves lapped at the alcoholic holds of the cage as I teetered atop my demise.

Where had my solace gone? The horde stood on the beach of sand waiting for the turn of tides as mongeese, raccoons and vacuums climbed the sides of my prison. If I jumped would the papers know the full story? Would I be chalked onto a blackboard as a fact, percentage, or statistic? No, I must survive to show I'm more than what I am. So I fought, clawed, beat my infant wings against futility. I fought until the warmth of the infant sun hit my scales and at once I was ash which had never existed.

Beer #6

To catch wildlife in true spirit is chance paired with patience. I might claim myself to be a dam buster but a lifetime of resistance is only chasing a shadow. The shadow is chalk on which I climb with hope that it believes in my ascent. I claw into the sides of wildlife hoping to appease the creator. This creator will also chase me from safety to danger. You are my creator and have forced me to fear. You watch to witness my true spirit and suffer in the observance of my struggle.

I've failed mother, the chalk has scribbled scales on the wall in the wake of my loss. They teetered as I fell, and followed suit as I hit the ground. I know you waited, but you might have been safer waiting on yourself. The love of our family can't be trivial if our hopes have always followed shadows of our past in hopes to gain access to the key of our future.

In short she asked me to yield, and I fell from the rotten fence of escape into the hands of a brotherhood of black and white two-dimensional figures of acceptance. I am now trapped in my demise, never allowed to perish. I've cursed myself and you to endless pursuit. If only a fire could release this desert of its oasis...

Modesto*- Bruce Connors*

holding up the mystic sword of power
I proceeded into the light

Modesto

A poem by Erick Jobson

Holding up my dying dog
a Pomeranian with a heart of gold
they were four golden ventricles and a pace
maker gilt.

Erick

A poem by the ideas

Joe arrived home late that night. His lover was already asleep.
"I have a problem with you - it, that
dog it pissed and shit all over
oh Joe the dogs upstairs already
" and you figured it out - the solution
to my whole life is bullshit

And you try to tell me not to think
just suck and
so I write - a sonnet to your pussy

slick pussy the essay
by whipper

snapper

I look around the stark kitchen
realize the breadbasket iz a little out of
alignment so I fix it. Kick the fleabag cat look out on Washington
square and I start thinking about a still born child
Who was that?!?!
lik it up
the idea by the Madonna

Bullshit

the complete compiled works
ed. Jon Watkins

The man who we fucked in a truckstop toilet
last week when we'd gone to smoke heroin and ideas
and lick it up, every last drop

Ideas
book the new york
times calls "revolutiony"

The Chronicles of Tim

PART I - Tim

Timothy Cutlass stretched out on the divan. The sun had surpassed its afternoon crest in the Arizona sky and Timothy longed for the cool shade of the organ pipe cactus he and a neighbor had attempted to transplant from the other side of the trailer park. The enormous plant had died some days after the transfer, having lost most of its root system during the excavation. It now lay awkwardly on its side - like a discarded Christmas tree - near the refuse collection site a few yards away from where Timothy was relaxing. Inside their trailer he could hear his wife, Tina-Sue, rattling away over the pots and pans. He craned his neck toward the screen door and yelled.

"Tina-Sue! You fixin' to make dinner already?" he said. There was no reply. More pots clanked. Tin. Tin. Kang-plink. "Humph."

Tim was ready to sprawl back out and take a nap when he heard a rattle in the pile of beer cans next to his sofa. He didn't think much of it: just the sagging sofa breaking another seam and lowering his napping post ever closer to the desert sand. He shook it off and realized how tired he was. Tina-Sue would have another lame dinner of potatoes and eggs ready within the hour he figured. Just enough time for a quick nap. He propped his head up to see just over the dead cactus plant Pin-pop tat. tat. tat... and it was off.

Out from underneath the divan and through the aluminum cans raced a creature the likes of which Timothy Cutlass had never before seen in his life. It flew out past the refuse collection site and into the desert. It was massive creature with a single head and three bodies. The bodies twisted down into a single pair of legs and there appeared to be a set of wings emerging from it back. This was no dog or wily-platypus. Tim thought. He knew, as most people in his neighborhood did, that the wily-platypus rarely left the Euphorbia Cactus Forest in the daylight. And even if it had, it did not move like this. This creature had a tail four meters long and as it zipped out into the desert hills the tail trailed along in the path of its zig-zagging owner, fading and disappearing like the trail of a sparkler in the dark. It turned a sharp left at the top of a hill crest and zoomed along the horizon giving Timothy a chance to see the black fur

coat shine under the oppressing sun. It ran on all fours with the hunched-shoulder rhythms of a rabbit. But again, too large to be mistaken for any kind of rodent; too large to have been hiding under the divan, Tim thought.

Then it stopped.

The creature stopped dead in its tracks out in the distance. It turned to face the direction of Tim and raised up on its hind legs. The wings spread out magnificently in a display and Tim squinted against the glare of the sun, disbelieving his eyes. He looked back over his shoulder to see if his wife was witness to any of this. There was only the persistent clatter of cookware. When he turned back to the horizon, the creature was still there. It was looking at Tim and it began to make a little motion. One dangling claw-arm began motioning. It swung in tiny circles, signaling Tim to follow.

“Now, what the hell...?” said Tim.

Tim scratched his mussed hair and tried to shake the image from his brain. He looked over at his dead cactus tree for a moment, trying to focus on something else, and back to where the creature was still swinging that one little arm, now more frantically. He tried to gather his senses. The only reasonable thing to do in situations like these, Tim thought, is to put a bullet in that little turd and parade its carcass around the neighborhood in the back of his truck so that everyone would believe his wild, hallucinatory story.

When Tim was a child, living with his aunt in the suburbs of Michigan, he had been visited in a similarly mysterious fashion by an equally unbelievable creature. He had been led on a three day journey of youthful self-discovery led by whimsical toe-headed creatures through forests and mazes. Or so that’s what he had told everyone when they found him unconscious and naked on the shores of Crooked Lake. The greater part of the truth of that memory had been repressed by years of therapy and the subsequent drama of the “disappearance” of his uncle Ted. What Tim did remember was his impotent inability to convince anyone to believe him about his adventures. He had been ridiculed and harassed. But that wasn’t going to happen again. This time he was going to capture, kill and stuff his proof.

In a large tool box under the trailer Tim kept his hunting rifle. He took a long look at the creature, still perched up on its hind legs, and slipped quietly over to the tool box and removed a Browning a-bolt Eclipse hunting rifle, traditionally used to hunt the seasonal aquafurrs that terrorized local Arizonans near the border-town of Naco.

Every year local trailer parks organized expeditions of out-of-work trailerites to encamp the surrounding area of the town and defend it against the organized raids of the aquafurrs. The origins of the species have never been discovered and the world at large has never invested much interest in helping to defend the local town in light of a more self-serving, vested interest involving the annual slaughter of thousands of potential border-crossing Mexicans by the unchecked populations of this creature. The aquafurrs thrive in the harsh desert conditions underground and emerge around mid-August for a feeding massacre. Casualties run high each season.

Tim leaned against a trailer tire and loaded the rifle.

When he returned his attention to the creature on the hill he caught just the tail end disappearing over the ridge. It was leading Tim away from the trailer park.

Tim got up, slung the rifle over his shoulder, grabbed a six pack of beers from the cooler next to his divan and began to trek out to where the beast had vanished over the horizon. He didn't bother telling Tina-Sue what he was about to do. She would just argue and remind him what a no-good, rock-sucking waste of a man he was. The last time he tried to leave to hunt a critter that ransacked their food stuffs, Tina-Sue shot him in the foot. She said he wasn't man enough to stand up to a raccoon, let alone the wily-platypus that had invaded their home.

He was going to show her. He was going to bring home the head of a new creature that no one had ever seen before. Maybe even make the newspapers.

By the time he had reached the summit, where he had seen the animal go over, Tim was out of breath - and thirsty. He opened a beer and looked around for his prey. At the bottom of the hill began a thick cactus grove where Dahlias flowered in an array of blues and purples all over the Echinoceros Cacti. Tim could find no trace of the creature, but there was a path leading through the grove - the obvious place for the hunted to try to hide. He descended the hill and approached the entrance to the grove. Near the entrance a willowspider crouched on a cactus and eyed Tim as he stopped just short of the threshold. Tim saw the arachnid before it could leap into his neck. He raised his rifle and dropped the end of the barrel point-blank in the face of the spider, taking a long swig of his beer and laughing as the spider switched its eyes left and right considering its escape. The willowspider trembled and inched one leg backwards, as if to say 'You win. I won't burrow into your neck and plant my babies in your spine. Forget I seen you, Mister.' But Tim began to tighten his grip on the stock and he squeezed.

Something smashed Tim's head from behind. The gun had not gone off and he was lying face up, his skull cracked and his head resting in a cactus patch. The willowspider bounced away into the bramble of cacti and the black creature Tim had been chasing was now standing over him, blocking the sun - creating a shadow of its face.

"Tim, you stupid son-of-a-bitch," it said. "We've got work to do and you're playing stick'em-holderup with willowspiders!"

The creature stepped out of the sun from where Tim was lying and picked up the rifle and the beers. Now up close, Tim could see that it wasn't fur the creature adorned, but something black and rubbery, much more like a seal coat than traditional mammal fur. His head was spinning and throbbing from the attack, but he managed to pull himself up into a sitting position for a moment before scrambling to his feet when it finally occurred to him that this thing was speaking to him. Tim was about to contest, but before he could stammer a word, the creature interrupted him.

"I am Geryon, the great and fair master of an estate just beyond the cactus grove where you have been chosen to work for me. As I am a fair master, I will set you to just one task per day, five days per week," Geryon said. At this point Tim found that they had already begun walking along the trail through the cactus grove. Geryon was behind him, the rifle pressed into his back. The soaring pain in Tim's head had begun to subside as they put the miles behind them. It seemed to Tim as though they had been walking for hours already. Geryon continued to speak as they marched. "If you have set yourself to your tasks well, there will be rewards that on the sixth and seventh day you may enjoy. For you see, I have seven daughters who get very lonely on my estate. Each week that you are successful in performing the tasks to which I have set you, you will be allowed the company of one of my daughters. As they range in age, so too do they in their temperaments. The youngest, Abigail, you will find is quite easy to get along with while the eldest, Gabriella, is what one may refer to as a 'stubborn crop.'" Geryon stopped talking.

Timothy had stopped walking.

"What halts our progress, Tim?" Geryon said. Tim didn't say anything for a moment. The sun had nearly gone down to the west, the direction they had been heading. The flickettes were just beginning their evening serenade beneath the cover of the prickly moss. Choo-shooka-shooka-ree... choo-shooka-shooka-ree! Geryon jabbed Tim in the lower back with his rifle and Tim swung abruptly around.

“What makes you think I want to go work for you on your estate?” he screamed. “What makes you think I want to try and please your daughters? I’ve got a wife! I’ve got a home!” He was breathing heavily and the eyes flooded with tears. Geryon could see that he was upset.

“Look, Tim,” he began. “Do you love your wife? Or rather, does she love you?” Tim shook his head. “And do you have a job to go back to? Do you have any family that is going to miss you?” Again, Tim shook his head. He realized that he had nothing back in that trailer park worth missing. And nothing back there was going to miss him. He had to concede that he had nothing to lose by joining the Geryon creature on his estate, taking up the daily tasks and setting himself to pleasing the seven daughters.

“This is why you have been chosen, Tim. You are a worthless and unwanted sage. The winds of misfortune and decay swirl all about you. You do not know your true potential and have thus set your life to whiling away the hours on your divan in a loveless marriage looking forward only to the annual trips to Naco to fight the aquafurrs. You are by no means a great man, but because of your apathy, you do not know that you are not a great man either.” Geryon ceased speaking and looked down to where Tim was curled up on the path, crying.

Geryon, being the great and fair master that he was, refrained from the urge to kick him in his side and instead picked him up in his huge rodent arms and again began their travels back to his estate. He decided to let Tim rest a while, for they had many days travel yet to make. The cactus grove was enormous and the path treacherous.

Five days had now passed and they arrived at a clearing. Tim was hungry and dehydrated and Geryon had long ago consumed all the beers. Over the last few days, Geryon had explained the rest of the situation to Tim, picking back up where Tim had interrupted to have his little meltdown resulting in him sobbing like an unwanted puppy in a hailstorm. As it was, Tim was to complete a single, reasonable task each day for five days out of the week and on the sixth and seventh day, he would be granted the courtship of one of Geryon’s seven daughters beginning with the youngest. If he were able to please each daughter successively and successfully for the seven weeks required to do so, Tim would then be granted the keys to the Estate of Geryon, as Geryon currently called it. The beast explained that in his age he would not be fit to rule his estate for many more years to come. He had never had a son, and his

daughters were far too wayfaring and fragile to handle such an affair. Tim would inherit the estate and the responsibility of the seven daughters upon satisfying the demands of Geryon.

Tim, realizing the futility of his life previous, had agreed to the proposition, though wasn't at all certain that he had any choice in the matter while Geryon still held his rifle and rested it between his shoulder blades the rest of the hike to the estate.

Once in the clearing Tim could see up on a great hill just before him a house that must have occupied the space of thirty trailer parks. And not just thirty trailer parks across, but thirty trailer parks high. Despite his fatigue and desire for water and rest, Tim let out a great whistle.

"You sure could fit a lot of nice trailers on an estate like this," he said. It was really all that Tim knew.

Once inside, he was given a meal, a bath and a bed to rest in. Geryon instructed him that his first task would begin the very next day, and he was allowed to sleep.

When the sun rose, the cock crowed and Tim awoke to find Geryon hovering over his bed. The bed was comfy and after several days travel, Tim wished to remain in the comfort of the warm, clean blankets for several hours longer, but he knew that he had agreed to perform the tasks of Geryon, so he swung his feet out of the bed and stood before his over-shadowing master.

"Prepare for me my morning cup of coffee!" he bellowed. Tim fell right back into the bed. He was startled by the seemingly unnecessary force with which such a simple demand had been delivered. He sat up in the bed and grinned.

"Is that all?" he asked, perhaps a little too familiarly.

Geryon roared back, "You will set yourself to the task each day that I demand of you and you will ask no further questions about it!"

Tim scrambled out of bed past Geryon and ran ten flights of stairs down to the kitchen to brew the beast his coffee. Though Tim had brewed coffee literally hundreds of times before, he made certain to follow the instructions on the package. He packed the ground beans into the measuring cup and leveled off the top. He measured the water carefully, being sure not to lose a drop in the transfer. Then he let it brew and he waited. When it was ready, Geryon came strolling into the room, drawn by the aroma of the roasted beans. He sat down at a table near the window and stared out, waiting for it

to cool. After an imperceptibly long period of time had passed and Tim had come to grow quite nervous, Geryon raised the steaming cup to his lips and slurped. He said nothing, but kept staring out the window. Tim wanted to leave. He wanted to run, to beg forgiveness. He wanted to know if he had satisfied the beast! At last, Geryon spoke. Without looking away from the window, he said, "The rest of the day is yours to do with as you please."

Contributors

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Stephen Gere lives and works in Boise, Idaho

Bill Gates is a homeless man who's saved up enough money for a house but previously lost his identity in a game of chess that he's been playing himself at and so looks nothing like the picture on his birth certificate.

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PA Valle is a cuddly curmudgeon to some, an asshole and nebbish to others.

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Eamonn Park hails originally from Boise, Idaho. His photography captures, admires, and criticizes the health and beauty of life. With great affection for analog, and a necessary concession to digital techniques, his work marries old and new. Eamonn likes to cook, supports NPR and holds a BFA from Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, Washington.
