

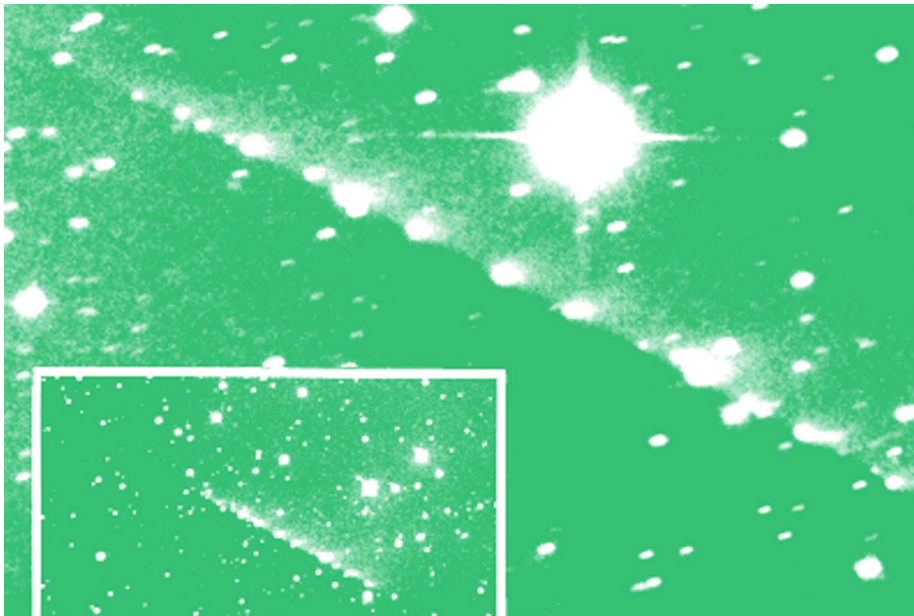
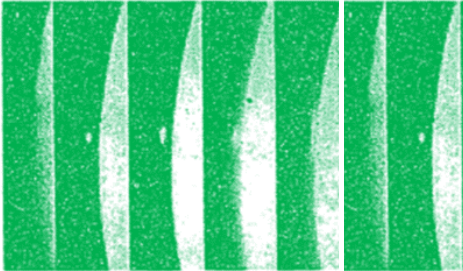
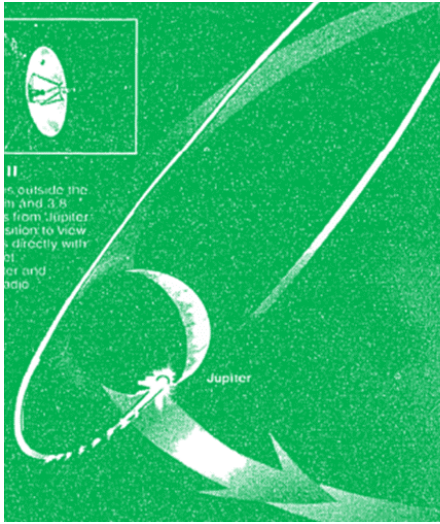
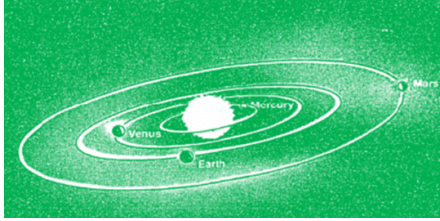
my husband is dating my boss
you're basically the last person
i'd usually come to for advice, but,
okay my husband my hubby and i
we got married and then it went bad
cuz my husband O My Husband
is dating my boss: my boss is actually hot,
and that
has caused a problem in our marriage
because well, writing this i am home and
they got dinner

excuse me, i'm the *last*
person you'd come to for advice? not
a great way to start the conversation
you sound like a judgmental person
everyone these days has become so
judgmental because: we have so much
access to so much information nad
twitter phrases everything like a
judgment and the late 90s made judging
funny and quippy, that aside i will
endeavor to answer your question: the
solution is to prank both your husband
and your boss by placing what is
colloquially referred to as a "thumbtack"
on their chairs when they sit they
will get pricked in the butt, this
will wake them up to the guilt, this will
show them





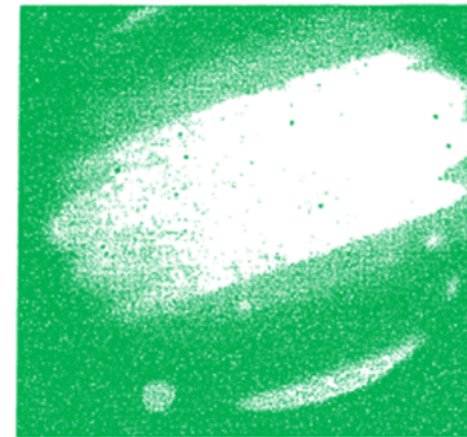
Astronomers Prepare for Comet's Collision With Jupiter



“There was a
big raging sea beneath the window,”



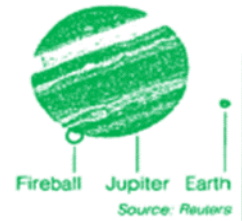
Post-collapse 2017 image indicating where the Azure Window had been



The New York Times; photograph by NASA via Associated Press

A fireball larger than the Earth burst into view as fragment G of the comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 hit the giant planet Jupiter at 3:28 A.M. Eastern time yesterday.

Relative sizes



Earth-Size Storm and Fireballs Shake Jupiter as a Comet Dies

Astronomers Marvel at Brilliance of Fragment G

By MALCOLM W. BROWNE

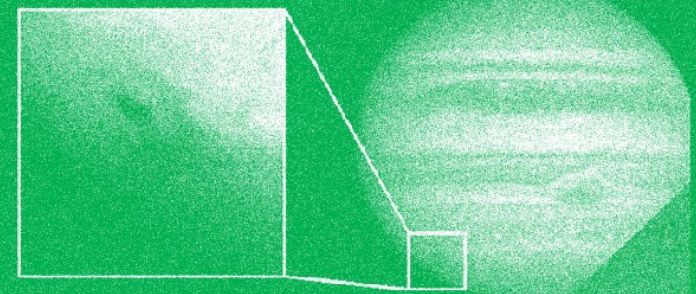
A continuing bombardment by fragments of the dying Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 ignited flashes on Jupiter yesterday that outshone the giant planet itself, sending up blazing fire-

astronomers were able to see it using telescopes no more powerful than those with light-collecting mirrors four inches in diameter, said Dr. Brian G. Marsden, director of the Cen-

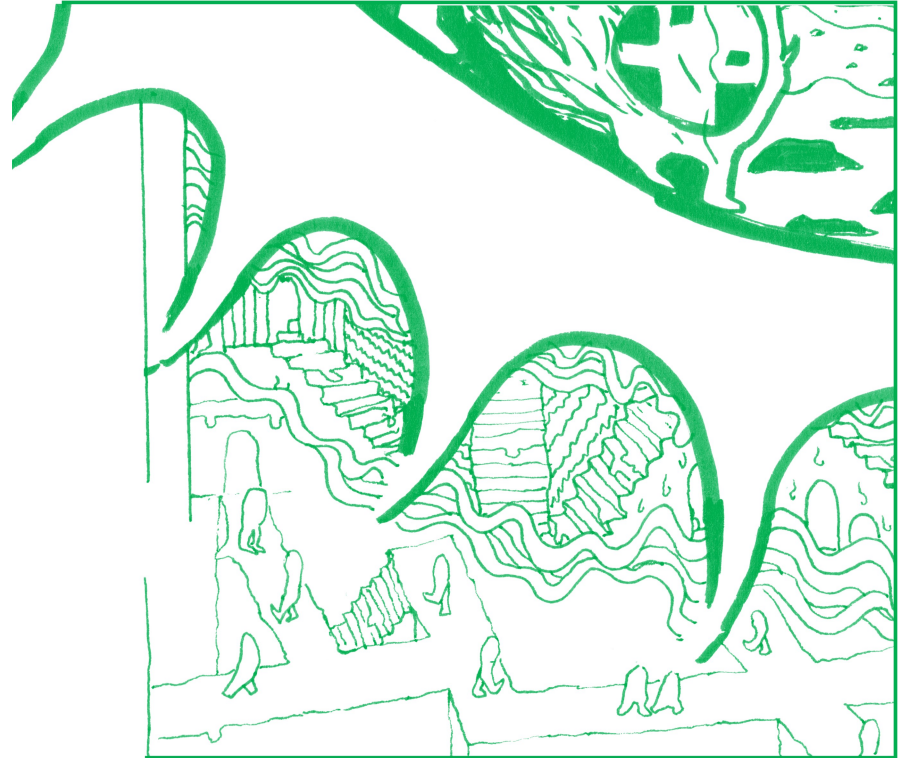
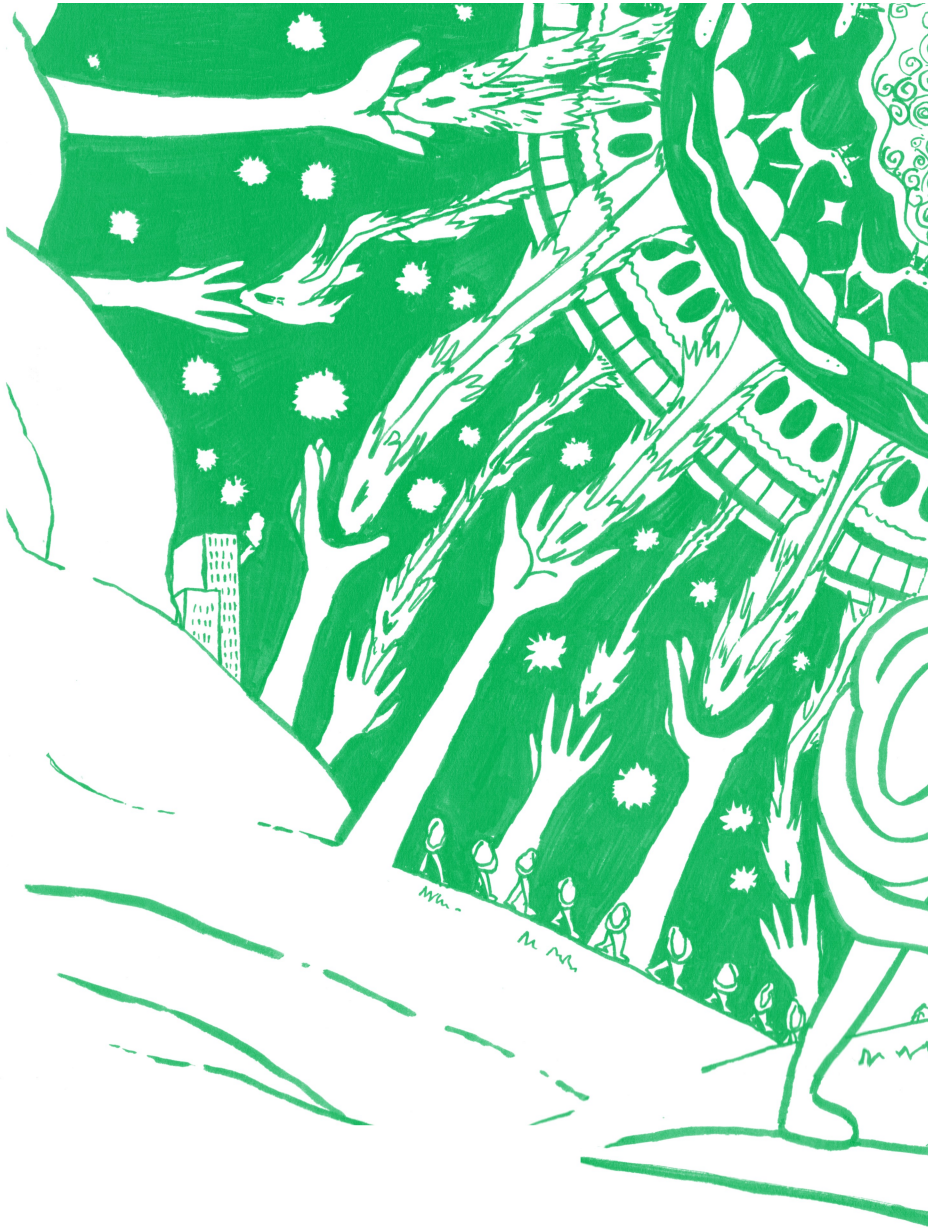
Jupiter

July 16, 1994

After impact site
Enlarged and Enhanced



Hubble Space Telescope
Wide Field Planetary Camera 2





PUKER

"never punched a sandbag" you'll say
"you wanna try?" that's what i'll say. i'll rip the velcro
off the tornup gloves, give em to you. "it's really simple
shit. give it the one two. elbows up. follow through."

"wow" you say, punching the sandbag with my tornup
gloves, "this is actually kinda fun."

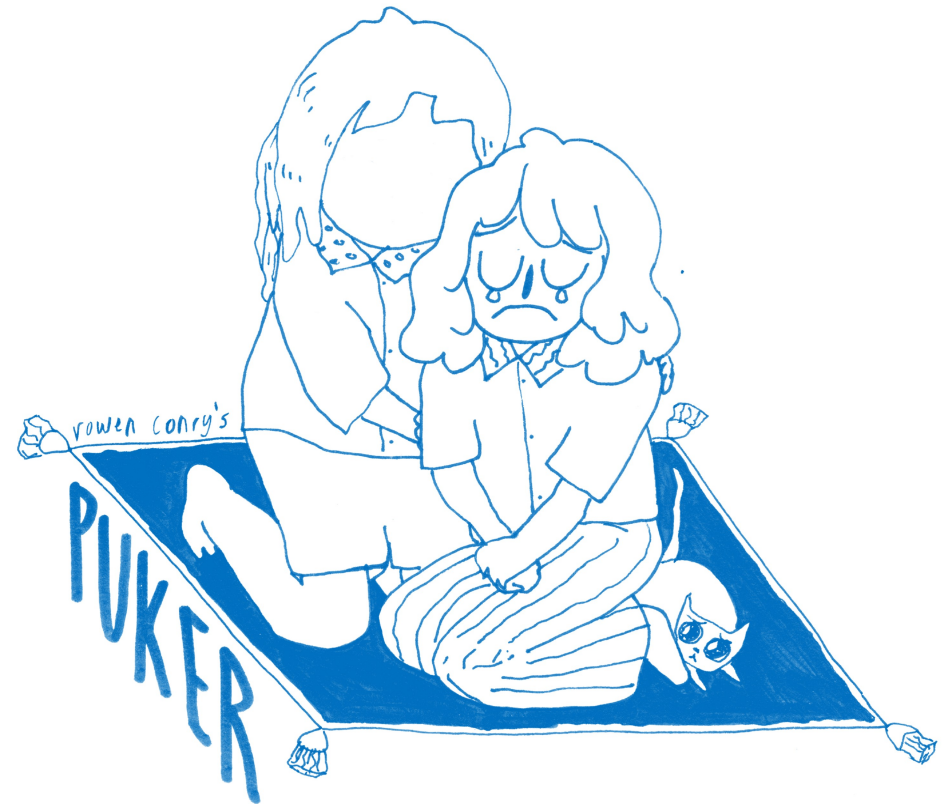
and you're fckin right. it is fun. it's fun to work up a
sweat. get fit. get that strength. i can lift up a car. i can
pull the weight of a fckin eighteen-wheeler. you can't
do that yet, but you'll get there. that's what i'm best at
here in the gd dm krypt: i believe. i believe you can do
it. i respect your work ethic. i fucking respect your will-
ingness to put on the gloves and give it a shot.

i'm strong. ive been strong since birth. but when you're
a kid, you don't know what to do with that strength. i
kept accidentally crushing 7ups before i drank em. i
had quadriceps to die for -- i would bury the other end
of the seesaw into the fcking ground.

had to learn to believe in myself. put that strength
somewhere.

the rest is gd dm history.

now i'm just chillin in the krypt again. alone. but you'll
be here soon. i've got a cold drink waitin for you. like a
v8 or some shit. that healthy shit.



the krypt

yeah, just me again here in the krypt. got my sandbag, got the old tornup gloves. love it here in the krypt.

puttin on my favorite playlist again. somethin to really get the blood pumpin. somethin with a beat thump thump thump, and rapid. some action movie montage shit. some final car chase shit. i listen to the music, i put the torn-up gloves on, i punch the fuckin sandbag.

ever seen a movie? that's how i wanna live. i hate seeing out of my dumbass eyes, single-perspective like. i want the world to cut shot to shot to shot. close up shots. far away shots. i want to walk into a building and get a view of the full fuckin building when i walk in, that's what they call an establishing shot. when you walk into the krypt, i put a picture over the door: a shot of the krypt my buddy took of the krypt with a drone. you can squint your eyes and block out your peripheral vision and focus your view on only that picture above the door, and pretend you got your own little establishing shot right there.

i care about you. when you come into the krypt, well, you're walkin right into the mfin care zone. i got stuff in the fridge. cold drinks. refreshing shit. i got protein bars. you can sit on my tornup couch and watch me punch the sandbag. i'll let you pick the tunes. they gotta be thumpin, but i'll let you pick em.

theme from puker

i have acne for the first time in ten years

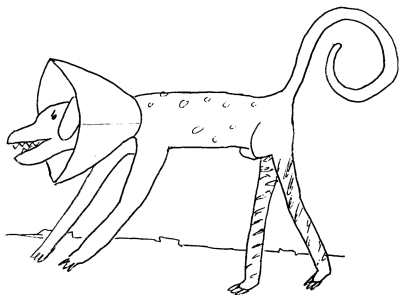
**jesus christ never felt as powerful as i do now
that was his choice, he totally could have**

you:

**a mirror rotated on time space axis
sneering and laughing and smiling and crying
and feeling so much in love with me and feeling
so much else**

me:

puking



rowen conry's poem for love

there's a waist high brick wall in town
i've been known to stand behind

do me a favor and let me lift you over it

i was born glassy eyed
with the moon hung round my neck
i was born on ice
i was born third eye held open with cleverly
constructed surgical implants

you punched me so hard i wasn't

you look like you on a hike
there's starling, there's junco, wren

wow, holds hand up for shade
and there's their nest

moon appeared to be closer in the sky. A small cat walked through the grass and looked up at Puker. The cat's eyes flashed. Puker felt around in her mouth. One of her teeth had suddenly disappeared. The cat walked off.

"I'm a little scared," said Jeannie, "I don't have any rocks to throw back. There's no equality. I'm rockless. I'm thinking of getting a new tattoo. Juniper Fontaine had a new tattoo of a guy rocking out on a guitar. I want to get a tattoo of a saxophone cuz I play the saxophone. When you go away, I'm going to use your pillow. It's more comfortable than mine."

Puker could barely remember who she was anymore. But she was definitely Puker. The word "tattoo" was one of the only things she could remember. It sparked in Puker's mind. She looked down. Her tattoo of the angel with the knife had almost faded away completely. It smiled at her. It was a comforting smile. "Next time, Puker, next time," it seemed to say.

The angel winked.

The old man blinked out of existence.

It was the shittiest headache Puker had ever had. She sat in her room. Jeannie knocked at her door.

"Puker," she said, "Something's throwing rocks at my window."

"I'm busy, Jean," said Puker.

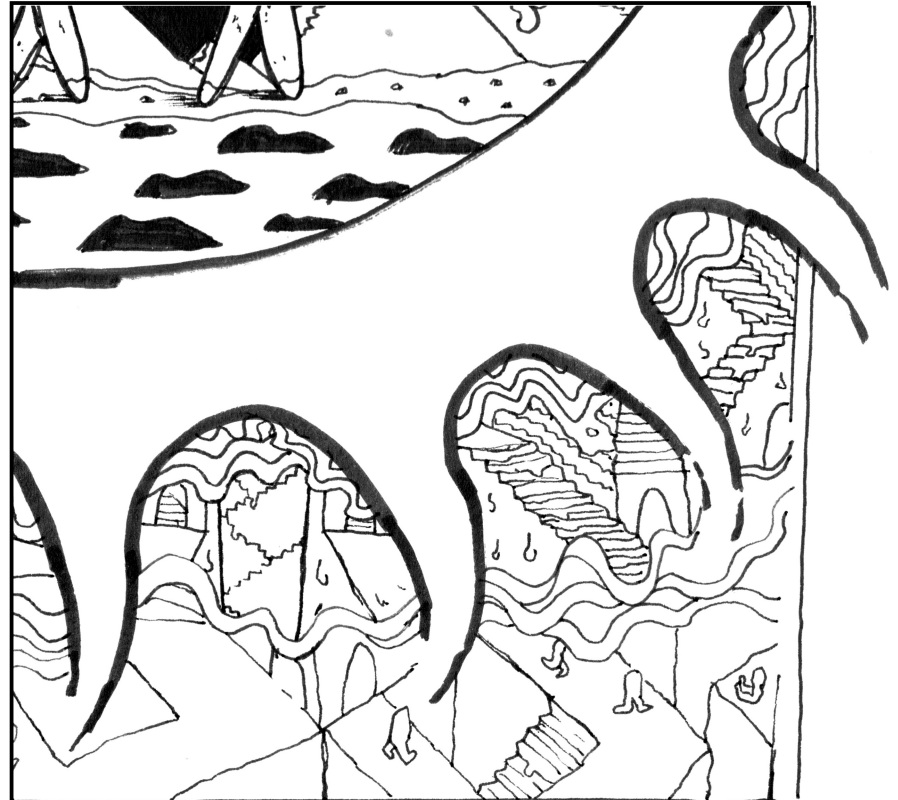
"No you're not," said Jeannie.

Puker opened the door. Jeannie led her to her room adjacent to Puker's.

"I don't see anything," said Puker.

"They must have stopped throwing them," said Jeannie, frowning.

Puker looked out the window. Everything seemed to have disappeared except for the house. There was only endless lawn in every direction. Sunlight seemed to be coming from everywhere. The





i kick somebody in the mouth

**my truck has a trailer
my peggy boots have steel toes
my face is fucked up
pretty sure it was you that fucked it up**

**im going to culvers
to psychically communicate with my dead grandma
hey grams, sorry it had to be culvers**

**so, this fella i need you to hex
yea, uh huh
yea**

**folks, (readers of the poem,)
all my grandmother said to me
was that you've got to be real careful about sharks**

she said

"You really fucked up, Puker," said the old man. His eyes looked shiny like they were both made of glass. He looked quite old. Puker suddenly realized he was wearing one of her shirts. It was her favorite shirt. He was too big for it. It was ripping at the sleeve. It looked ragged and worn. The man's pants were baggy and formless. His shoes were too small for his feet. His toes popped out.

The man continued speaking. "I'm not really here to warn you. I'm usually one who enjoys pointing fingers. Narrowing down the blame. Explaining the enemy. But I can't even help you there. Everyone's out to get you. If you could still feel your feet, you'd notice you're already sunk to the ankles into Earth. You've noticed already the sun's out for you. Look up at the clouds. See how they're all moving in the same direction? They're all moving towards you? They're all getting lower? Watch out for the air itself, Puker. Air is one of the weaker of spitshines but enough of it gathered together can pack a punch. I'd say you don't have much time left. As for myself?" The man reached forward and snapped the pinky finger off of Puker's right hand. "Simply in search of a memory. A ward to carry me to the next. Now I'd caution you to stay inside."

Jeannie was running around the kitchen, "Oh Nes would you guess? Guess guess guess."

"I'm not feeling good," said Puker.

"Juniper Fontaine," said Jeannie, "And her MOM! And they gave me a cookie for FREE!"

Later, Puker stepped outside. A walk would do her some good. Immediately the sun burnt a hole in her arm. She could see bone. Somehow, it didn't hurt. She took a step further outside. The sun burnt a hole in her head just above the eye.

"Well, shit," Puker said.

A hardheaded individual with a checkered past, Puker determined to spite nature. She removed an umbrella from the crowded umbrella stand and held it as parasol against the sun, stepping further outside.

"Hey there Puker," said an old man she'd never seen before. He was crossing the lawn.

"Hi there," said Puker, "Who are you?"

**i recently watched a documentary
you've got to pay attention
any potential shark situation i would be watching
out for fins and teeth i'd
scan the horizon**

**but this guy fucked up my face grams
was it around water?
no it was behind hilton hotel and suites
near the lake?
no on the other side of the highway
then nothing to worry about rowen,
i cant see why youre so gosh darn upset!
love, granny**

**anyway, thats why i had to go back there and kick
this guy in the mouth!**

birds were making any noise but she could tell they were saying something. They were telling her something. One bird would say a word and the other bird would say the next word.

daytime

**kitchen window sunlight smack
light is so hard so heavy
scouring out tile white and blue white and blue**

**this old self-righteousness
cult laughter you drown it out
glasses pushed up into your hair you squint
out into the little yard**

**you regular old lighthouse
i can feel you hovering an inch off the ground
even if i can't see it**

**later on roger street
flash back to a ray a beam
maybe the same beam
your beam out of a bird's mouth
a bird with your eye
an eye with a way to look i can't look**

PUKER

ARE

YOU

THERE

ARE

YOU

THERE

PUKER

YOU' VE

GOT

A

LOT

OF

NERVE

PUKER

GOOD

LUCK

CHUMP

GOOD

LUCK

CHUMP

ing the shirt's blue and white pattern. Sun-
light filtered in, highlighting Puker's almost
translucent ears. She blinked and a number of
her eyelashes fell out.

"Keep it down, Jean, I got a headache," said
Puker.

"You'll never believe who I saw at the mall to-
day," said Jeannie, whispering extremely loud-
ly, doing stretches, crossing and uncrossing
her arms in different ways. "Actually I saw two
people. Guess. But I bet you won't get it."

"I said quiet, Jean." Puker looked out the win-
dow. Something was happening out there. A bird,
no, two birds had landed on the clothesline.
They were standing very close to each other,
almost like they were overlapping with each
other. One of the birds slowly opened its
mouth. Then it closed it. Then the other bird
opened its mouth. Then when that bird closed
its mouth the other bird opened its mouth.
There was always one bird with its mouth open.

Suddenly Puker got a strange feeling, something
she had never felt before. Like she could read
lips, but not human lips. That was it: she
could read bird lips. It didn't seem like the

the poem about how my friends are funny

every one of my friends
is so funny
it is shocking to me still
they are comedy experts
they have so many jokes
god their minds have to be working
just about a thousand miles a minute
yeah they were probably
very funny kids
growing up and learning the ins and outs
of cadence and delivery
now they can really knock your socks off
every hour you remember and you laugh again
i mean frankly
it's amazing
and it keeps happening
and they'll keep doing it
they're gonna be old and funny
they're gonna have one of those cheery funerals
where everyone chuckles and wipes up a tear
and every eulogy starts with a joke
and i wear my heavy coat
in a room full of revelers
sweating and laughing

PUKER

his fan theory

**his fan theory
is that all The Companies
died actually on Y2K,
the rest of our lives is a
dream of Time Warner Industries
in the moment before death**

**well, i'm not doctor,
but i actually got sent
to the hospital for drinking
too much**

**i searched every hallway i did not
see Time Warner Industries anywhere
in any of the rooms
and that's another myth BUSTED**

Jeannie came down the flight of stairs in one giant leap. "EVENING PUKER!!!" she shouted at the top of her lungs screaming and flailing. She kicked at the wall down by the baseboard and slapped her hands on the kitchen counter bang bang bang.

Puker looked up from her seat at the kitchen table. She was thin and sickly, looking like a ghoul. Her eyes had changed color overnight from blue to dark gray. Her hair had faded from cherry brown to dark brown. Her fingernails had chipped and crumbled away at weird angles. Her tattoo of an angel holding a knife was slowly fading. The hair on her arms was sticking up. Her shirt collar looked to be stained from the inside by some strange substance with gel-like consistency, darken-

two. But here's the thing. I told you about this the other night, right? How everyone's basically given up trying to find the number between negative 45,000,556 and negative 45,000,555? Right? Well," Steph leaned closer, "Hon. Honey. Honey bunny. Honey honey bunny. Not a WORD, not a WORD of this to anyone, but... I found it. I fucking found it."

Steph leaned back in the little chair, arms crossing. "I did it. I know more numbers than anyone else on the god damn fucking earth."

"Holy fuck," said Molly, "You are so fucking hot."

It was right then. It barely lasted a second. The Ego-tarian was visible for less than that. Big purple splotch, looking a little too much like a comic book grim reaper. And then Steph had no head.

Bragging about numbers in front of a cloaked Ego-tarian. Classic mistake.

"God fucking damn." said Molly.

That was her. Shitty TV keeps breaking, shitty Macy's job pays pennies, shitty thing for math freaks ruins her life one hottie to the next. And now G.Y.U.R.N.'s coming back, and from the looks of it, in full force. Probably gonna end up having to sleep on the ceiling of her apartment tonight, or the wall. Nothing made sense any more. But couldn't it at least kill some bookworms and keep her number crunching cuties alive and ticking?

mal's poem

gotta get that mouse
gotta get that mouse
gotta get that mouse
gotta get that mouse
gotta get that mouse
gotta get that mouse
gotta get that mouse
gotta get that mouse



scylla x charybdis

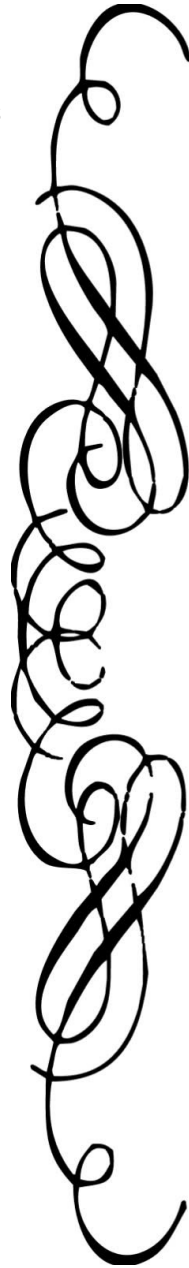
on the darkweb
they're drawing me fucked by glaucus
but
in the hallowed halls of
deviantart.com
it's you and me baby

that dumbass poison was the best
fucking thing that ever happened to
me
i have three dog dicks and
i can fucking slither and
i can fuck

remember when we met? you were
eating some argonauts, i was
drinking down the blood of a
confused old god who mistook this
stupid-ass strait for the fucking
river of life

we can't move, but we can sure as
hell
cyber
i want to type out
every little thing i'm gonna do to that
whirlpool of yours

"shipping hazard" my ass
i've got your shipping hazard
right here



short skyscraper. Steph looked unworried. Of course Steph looked unworried. Molly tried to look unworried too.

"I don't even wanna talk about it unless you want to," said Molly.

Steph smiled a little.

"I mean," Molly continued, "It's stupid, for one. So fucking dumb. And you—" Jesus Christ, her voice was already breaking, "You, god damn... I want you to live your life, Steph. How you want. Right? You wanna find out how many digits there are if you take the end of predicted time and divide it some fucking way? I'm not gonna take that from you. I dunno. Jesus."

Steph leaned over and kissed her on the forehead. And then Steph started talking.

"I already know how many digits there are. In all the ways. All division. All multiplication. I know basically everything, Moll. I know basically every number. I told you. I'm pretty sure there's only three more numbers. Just three more numbers, and then I have it. There might actually only be two. I think there's a number between five and six. But there might not be. I'm not sure. There's no general consensus about that one. The other two, there's a pretty fair general consensus about. We're all pretty sure that there's a number between 1 million and 1 million and one. So we have to find that. And we're all pretty sure there's one more number hiding out between negative $i3.43249$ and the Cousinford Digit or at least something related to a number, something that'll lead us to a number. We have to find that one, too. We're pretty sure of those

That was one nice thing about Leonard the Car Park Guy. He never wanted to talk about G.Y.U.R.N.

"The concept of headlights? I believe so?" said Molly.

"Of why deer stop for 'em?"

"Deer? Why?"

"Future vision," said Leonard, "Deer eyes. Special photoreceptors. Psychic photoreceptors. Foretellers. S'posed to help them premonish with the moon. The more light, the more future they see. Moon gives 'em a lil' gleep into the next day. Just enough to be wary of the next little danger. But headlights are too bright. Takes 'em to the end of time. They see the Last Thing, the Final Hour. Stops 'em right in their tracks."

"I can't believe you were able to fix this thing," said Molly, shoving the trunk closed on the old TV.

"Anytime," said Leonard.



That evening, even with the sun just below the horizon, the sky was bright. All across it, the slick filament of the Clinefelter Mode glistened with about half the brightness of any given star. Six or seven red ovals hung among it, moving slightly, ever so slightly, against the direction of the motion of the sun. Molly knew tomorrow there would be hundreds more.

She met Steph at a late night cookie shop under a

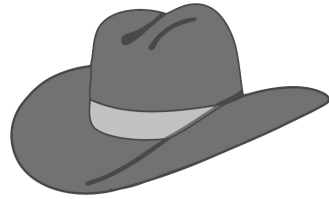
the trick
if there's a time you can stop by
and pick me up carry me across the
fenced-in bridge that takes you
over the tracks and head down mor-
ganford sandals slapping your hair
all wavy at the ends the wristband
with the crystal this kind of car-
nival starts in dark heartbeats out
of a thick thing to the past where
liquid takes up the grooves of a
central pillar tall pillar evil
pillar the barker was a wide flat
rock watermade screaming on time's
axis into a circulatory system
pumping dust like fleas through de-
termined routines determined by
mood determined by gravity and tid-
al forces i think you'll clap to
that i think the crystal wristband
will keep catching the light each
clap blinking blink blink blink
morse code dots unaltering adding
up maybe to some uncountable number
like binary 1s the more claps the
greater infinity gets the genius is
the genius of appreciation you my
friend know how to appreciate and
that's the real show the grateful
dot dot dot now the lone acrobat
thin and extremely coordinated
turns head to you and imperceptibly
nods the lone acrobat dedicates
this next trick to you holding feet
with hands tumbling across what
looks to me from where i am like a
series of power lines trailing into
the distance the lone acrobat gets
smaller and smaller we never found
out if the trick had an end

hellisreal.com

listen up kids
you don't believe in hell?
i got a little story for ya
about a website
that'll tell ya otherwise
so get wise
i used to be like you
nothin' to do
but stew
fuckin' around with my friends
a bunch of dead ends
lazin
grazin on grass like sheep
asleep

we used to do it all
drugs
sex
clownin around shootin up pills
and takin spills
rainbow parties
poppin uppers and downers like smarties
jumpin off balconies for funsies
thinkin we could never die
the ultimate lie

spin the bottle but with sex
we would do that
passin around every std in the tri-county area
like malaria
orgies past midnight
bodies in motion and copious amounts of lotion
with drugs involved as well



When her shift ended she pushed her way through the mall. Jesus Christ, everyone was talking about it. G.Y.U.R.N. G.Y.U.R.N. G.Y.U.R.N. You don't *have* to talk about it. It's not a *requirement*. There *are* other things to talk about.

She gave Rachel her Bondell book back and Jesus Christ, now *she* wanted to talk about it. But Molly remembered Rachel was dating some weird loser but some weird loser who was a numbers freak. Something in common.

"So what're you gonna do?" asked Rachel.

"I dunno," said Molly, "Steph doesn't even read. I tried all the good books, the ones even math freaks like. Steph hasn't even read Carter or Wimbell or the Narratives, Rache."

"Oh, God," said Rachel, "I mean... I convinced Bronson to stop wearing the nerd shirts with the math jokes. Like a giant flashing sign for the Egos, fucking dumb move even for math fucks. Although sometimes he still wears this Pi shirt, like it has a picture of the Pi symbol and then a piece of pie... I mean that's stupid enough, right? That's not Time Theory bullshit that'll get you instantly obliterated? I dunno, Molly. Why do we date these weirdo fucks, right?"

"You know why," said Molly. They smiled at each other.

Then down in the Car Park, Molly got her TV back from Leonard. He helped her move it to her car.

"Headlights," he said, "You aware of the concept?"

that's the way it is. With me anyway, thought Molly, because first of all, God and Jesus, Millman's Coffee smells so good and it tastes almost as good as it smells. But also: GOD and JESUS, if that isn't what makes those math freaks so hot. Lugging their computers and calculators around against all odds, proudly displaying their little freak fuck calculator watches like they don't give a damn that Time itself has created goons, unfeeling ever-present cloaking warping Goons to hunt down the Big Idea, to hunt down anyone with any chance of knowing anything about how life works how life really works, really really works. Ugh, shit, shit, GOD. Steph, my sweet sweet Steph. G.Y.U.R.N.'s back, G.Y.U.R.N.'s back, blah blah blah, Jackson chatting to Stace wondering our Macy's is going to sell more or sell less because of it. I'm trying to kiss this fucking math head, this fucking math head Steph's fucking head is probably exploding right now before I can kiss it again! I don't give a fuck about Macy's!

"Oh!" said Jackson, turning to Molly, "Forgot until now. Ran into the Car Park Guy. Says the TV's in his truck. Says you oughta come get it when your shift's over. Says it works good as the day it was made."

"Oh, shit yes," said Molly, "Leonard knows what the fuck is up."

"Leonard knows what the fuck is up," Jackson agreed, "Dude fixed my kid brother's fuckin' *light up shoes*, he can do anything."



"there aint no such thing as hell"
is what we said
what we would say
losin control
poppin pills like tootsie rolls
livin' like the livin' dead
poppin pills like airheads

eatin weed like sixlets
smoking it too
and doing cocaine
feelin' no pain

pumpin punk music and heavy metal
like butterfingers and skittles
rockin out to satan's very own words
candy

and doin' cocaine
bumpin lines

yes
and having sex all the time

then i found it
the one dot com
that dropped the bomb
on this country bumpkin
this freakjoy cowboy well let me tell you
hell is a fact
jack
and a simple visit to the web
will stick you in place
regret is real
like hell
ya feel?

on the bridge

light spills flash over

**long straight ruddy throughway the beam
screaming out birds and bats the walls
of the underneath crash with grn grn the
sound**

**concrete brittle cracks crumbles heat
smooths the edges**

**one little moment of silence and it peaks
again**

**higher this time through the bright hot light
see it**

**grumbling thrashing teeth spinning into the
mud flaking**

**flashfire and everything red whistling up up
the tracks**

it's grn grn grn it is grn grn grn

rrg uh grr rrg uh grr hoo hoo hoo hoo

whoosing steam

heeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeish

**pitch shifting rending into pitch unhearable
circling**

**low now thumping knn knn knn knn twin
sounds chasing**

metal on metal on metal ee ee screech

in a flame watching

**in steam watching the eye of machine god
watching**

**pole flip passing now passing passing pass-
ing**

**fading furnace big red sun taking with it
fire, fire, fire**

"You see the Car Park Guy?" Molly asked Stace.

"Oh, Molly!" said Stace, "Shit, I literally looked at that Stapleton book and was like 'I gotta get this back to Moll.' And I didn't. Bad friend, bad coworker."

Molly smiled. "Did you see Leonard?"

"The Car Park Guy? I never see the Car Park Guy. Min always sees the Car Park Guy. The Car Park Guy was saying some crazy shit to Min the other day. Did Min tell you? About the Car Park Guy talking about how tires were the world's last hydra? You slash 'em and they keep making more?"

"He said he was gonna fix my TV," said Molly, "My TV got fucked up."

They spent the rest of the shift small talking at the double registers. Jackson came up and talked to Stace, and they talked about G.Y.U.R.N. coming back. *God*, Molly thought, *Look at these two. Look at this Jackson and this Stace. So casual about the return of G.Y.U.R.N. They're so carefree cuz neither of them gives a shit about math. I should be care-free. I don't give a shit about math. But god damn. It's my type, my goddamn type. First Alex, now I know those bullshit Egotarians are gonna come down and find Steph doing some godawful calculation or arithmetical whatever. I gotta stop hanging around the side of town where all these math cuties get coffee and do fucking math on their math computers. Who the fuck even owns a computer, would take that risk in G.Y.U.R.N.-era where physics barely matter and keep changing all the time anyway? But*

G.Y.U.R.N.

"Welp, guys, G.Y.U.R.N.'s back." That was Stace coming out of the carpark. She had changed her hair. Molly noticed. But where was the Car Park Guy, who was supposed to return Molly's television to her, fixed? And what would the coming of G.Y.U.R.N. mean for Molly this time? Because last time it hadn't gone well for Molly. That was the end of the whole thing between her and Alex, the end of the whole Good Times between her and her Mom, not to mention the radical reshaping of the planet by the ominous and downright impossible tidal forces of the Clinefelter Mode, the start of a brand new Space Type, the type you would find glowing and growing in weird places, I mean like, half the mall had to be restructured because physics were different over by the Dillard's. Alex, O Alex, where was Alex now, that cutie arithmetic freak who had (classic mistake) calculated in front of a cloaked Egotarian. And broken up with her, too, just before that. But that was history, long long ago...



poem for golden tooth

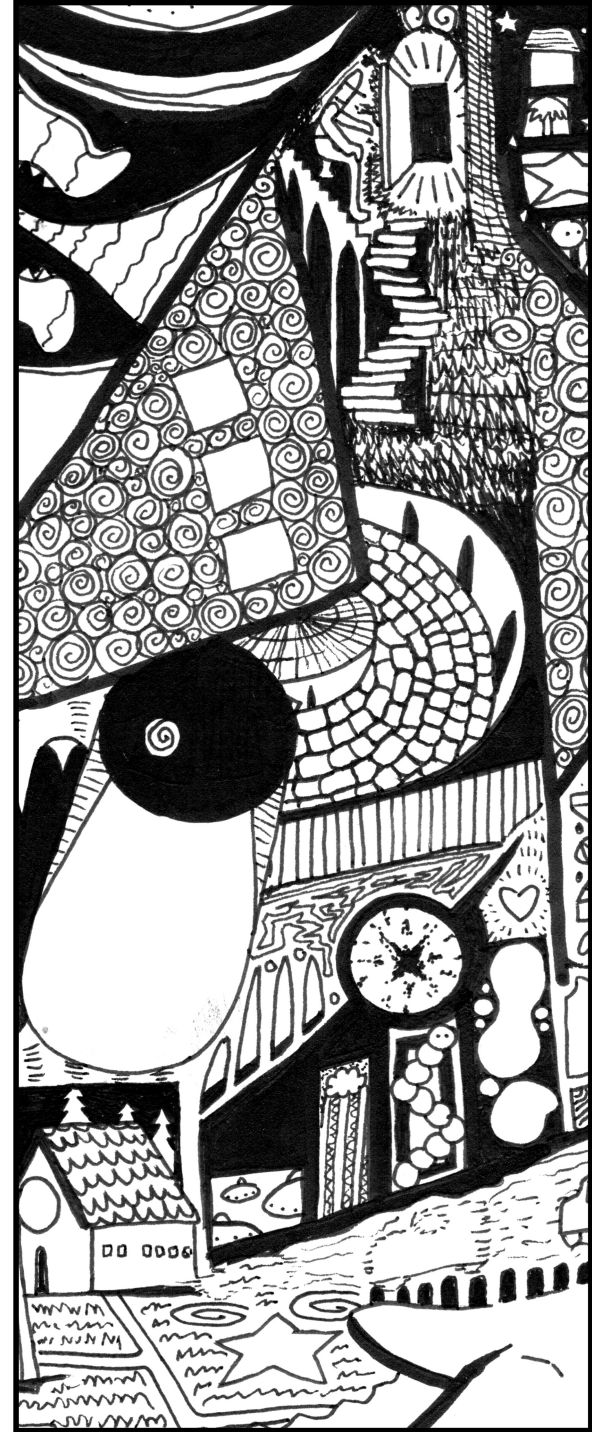
are you coming to community supper?
tonight the earth comes up easy, palmfuls
burying ourselves in mountains like sand dunes
there's them and them and you
like a golden tooth

if i laugh like barking
if the river cool breeze knocks
hair out from behind your ear

my skin, dry, cracks, booms,
rain then thunder
going to sit on a log
under a branch, crashing, crashing

wind whip the world is barrels bursting
okay, so hold on by a finger, rain and sweat
hundred mile an hour dam bursting
crash crack boom

the door shuts behind us.
there is a rectangle of yellow light.



rowen cony's "pucker"

she said. She hit the brakes. We lurched the other way this time, heads flung forward. She veered hard into the right lane. In front of us was a battered subaru with a bumper sticker.

“crazy cat lady on board” it said.

"Mm," she said, "Boring. Boring."

We kept driving.



LOWEN CONRY'S

PUNKER

poem for the long necked bottle
years ago i watched somebody shoot
a gun into a glass windowpane the
glass shattered outward the noise
seemed to reflect across the glass
before it shattered redoubling the
noise our ears almost bursting the
loudest peak of gunshot fuzzing in-
to something sounding like dragging
a heavy carpet the earth was small-
er then as an effectively infinite
amount of tiny meteors had yet to
collide with it each forming an in-
credibly small impact crater that
disappeared almost as quickly as it
appeared falling victim to wind or
water or the general shifting of
little dirt as the zero-energy hum
of the world that sets particles
buzzing faded the craters away one
by one by one until now in the pre-
sent day that gun sound might still
be bouncing around somewhere
trapped in a hole or really high in
the sky that gun might still be
around in the hands of that same
you or traded off in a paper doll
string of hands one to one to one
the gun makes its way probably not
too far through the midwest it al-
ways knows the soil as heavy in
clay and can smell a field nearby
maybe it feels bad for what it did
to the glass or maybe it has done
much worse rope is made specifical-
ly and frays back into chaos unspe-
cifically but glass like in windows
and the long necked bottle breaks
just about as clean as how you make
it

Or maybe, because later that night in that
strange hotel I'd gone down to the beach alone,
wanting to look at the waves without anything
else to bother me. And I looked out at the waves
and drew a cube in the sand the way you do
when you doodle. And felt rather good. And
when I came back she was huddled in front of
the little TV with some local game of volleyball
on. She was watching volleyball, which I think
was supposed to be a joke. And again, I had no
idea what to say.

~

On a sandbar by the river, I set up my telescope
and we looked at Andromeda. That was yester-
day.

"How long's it been," she said, "Since I looked
down into here."

She squinted. Then she stepped aside to let me
look.

"It doesn't feel like stars," she said, "It feels like
a microbe."

Now we were speeding down the highway in the
Saturn. My family's home was just out of town.
She was going to spend the night. We were going
quite fast.

"The sticker," I repeated back to her.

"It was like, something on board. Like a gag,"

corners at odd angles. It was simple once you got used to it, but for a while it felt like a real maze. We had to keep taking out our room key and looking at the number, trying to puzzle out how that number fit in to all the numbers we were seeing around us.

She'd brought paint. She had an easel too. I set up on the floor opposite her. This was late at night in the little room. We'd gone to the shop down the road and bought pizza rolls on a whim. Neither of us had eaten pizza rolls in at least ten years.

"I want to cut off my leg and grow it back," she'd said, "I really think I could."

This was a joke she told a lot, which I never figured out how to respond to.

I painted a cat, and the three of us riding on its back. She painted her and me by the cold Olympia beach. It was incredible how much detail she could get onto the canvas in such a small amount of time.

"I love your cat," she said.

~

I keep both those paintings in a box downstairs. I'm afraid to look at them.

Not that anything's happened. But an amount of time passes and it becomes terrifying to remember anything, even if it's a good thing.





poem for the owl

something's different the clear night fits over a dark spot bowling pin with wings silent flaps take the owl low the stillness the warmth of this night brings people out to stoop rattling metal making work making music out their doors the owl hears music the owl gets the jist of music but only half understands the owl's friends send the owl playlists still the owl only half understands the owl thinks is music a way to talk about the killing of mice without killing mice or is music a way to escape the resounding pounding notion that mice must be killed 1 mouse equals 1 meal 1 like equals 1 wingbeat 1 share equals the silence in the beating of that wing because in winter the owl's wings beat silent and the world was silent and in spring the owl's wings beat silent and the world moves so much loves so much step sounds

the bathroom and didn't come out for like thirty minutes. When she came out, she showed me a sketch she'd done of us sitting with the telescope.

"Tag yourself," she'd said, "The sun or mercury."

I was very impressed with the sketch. That was the night we watched infomercials for almost two hours. That was her idea.

"They're so funny," she said, "I don't know. Something about the cadence."

~

Thinking about it, that was probably the best trip we took together. We took three. But one we also brought along Hanne Rich, and that threw the whole dynamic off, so it was a bit of a lost cause from the start. Hanne would always try to shake hands with the checkout people at gas stations. Most of them would take her up on it.

"I get it," Hanne would say when she was drunk, "I think that's what pisses people off. I think I actually get it, how it all fits together. And people don't like that."

When we were out past Seattle Hanne found someone staying in the same hotel she wanted to sleep with and we had the room to ourselves a couple nights. It was a strange hotel. The two wings were long rectangles dense with wood planking and wood siding. The staircases tunneled around inside, hallways appearing around

"What?" I said.

The needle on the dash climbed higher.

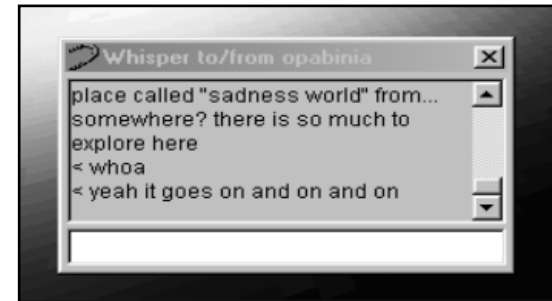
~

She'd had the 1999 Saturn since I'd known her. I think her parents gave it to her in the 9th grade. It was the old tan color you saw on cars from back then. One shade darker than the beige they put on old computers. The seats were some kind of gray felt or cloth. It was a car pretty well at the end of its life. The floor of the cabin on the passenger's side was so rusted somewhere underneath the thin carpet that it had become squishy. You could push with your foot and it would depress a couple of inches. Sometimes you could get it to go down far enough that you'd hear scraping from the road beneath.

It was the car we'd used to drive to Colorado back in college. That was the trip we saw mercury in transit over the sun. We parked at a Dollar General and hunkered over my telescope. The sun made the shape of a small yellow circle on the telescope's pitch dark filter. Then mercury crossed over, a tiny black dot making its way slow across the yellow circle.

"That's it," I'd said when it was over. She had the same old look of mild bemusement on her face. She did a little nod.

That night, we checked into a hotel room. It was an awfully cheap hotel but the room was nice - wood-paneled with a loud minifridge. She went to



people coo their people noises the owl wearing clear night's jacket the owl's beat up toyota camry hugging closed mountain course the owl's disdain for rotting finch the owl's pea brain clicking away in the owl's head the owl's fate the owl's death in two years to some owl disease none of us have ever heard of the owl's funeral a service full of ants flies maggots a mouse ripping hunks of not understanding poetic justice meat from the formless glob of the owl's not understanding poetic justice body the owl had seven epiphanies in the owl's life six of them were normal people thoughts thoughts normal people have billions of every day but the seventh epiphany is a thought no animal has ever had and no animal will ever have again it changed the owl's life forever and the owl knew that it had

A witch flies by upon her broom
The clock says it will be midnight soon

Skeletons dance just outside my door
I scream in terror at the horror

I think it is zombies that scare me the most
Look over there! Is that a ghost??

So I hope you do not think I am mean
When I jump out to wish you

HAPPY HALLOWEEN!!



the sticker

I wasn't paying attention when the car lurched forward. The whole thing started rumbling, screaming. I looked over and her hands had gone white knuckle on the wheel, the needle on the dash jumping 5, 10, 20 mph. She had the same expression she always had, though -- that scrunched brow and the little bemused frown like everything was very mildly surprising.

"Hey, whoa," I said, words coming out in mumble. She mumbled something back but the car was screaming too loud to hear. She was swerving into the lane to our left, buzzing past a couple cars on our right. She skipped out fast in front of another car that was crossing from the far left lane toward an exit ramp.

"Why? What's happening?" I said.

"It was on board," she said, "On board. The sticker."



rowen conry's



P U K E R