**A**cquiring access into my brain is something that few will ever obtain. Inside my brain, into the core, lie the feelings, words, and unique twists that make up my person. I am a person without a label. To appoint me to a direct congregation is impossible.

**T**he second best I can give you, oppose to instant access, is a display of the visions created by my mind and soul. This is my piece of public display to the world. To begin, I show my imagination, welcome to the section of short stories, and enjoy.

## The Intensity of the Campfire

It was a cold and dark evening. The wind blew with a fierce force, full of hate. The temperature of the night was enough to send chills that seemed convulsive. A night like this seemed deadly, not by its actions, but simply through the setting it created.

The town of Singleton felt the rawest form of this evening. Or more so, this evening felt the town of Singleton. And it felt it with a muscular grip. People peered out their windows, drawn in by the peculiar weather. It had not been this cold and windy in years. Not since "that one night."

The typical spectacle of this evening consisted of trees flailing violently in the wind, bowing almost into a submission, made final by a single piercing crack. A crack that could only be mistaken for lightning. There was no lightning tonight. Just cold and wind.

Sundry objects strewn round the typical household yard flew uncharacteristically in intense circulating paths, from one yard to the next. Rakes and toys, pots, garbage cans, all would be laid indiscriminately to rest in fresh territory, but not just yet. Not until the wind itself settled down.

Neighbors kicked their heat up, as they doubled their stock of blankets around them. Children complained, and routine bedtimes found themselves stretched late into the night. On a night like this. They were infrequent enough, that much is true, but when they did come, they were certain to be remembered for some time to come.

Some people like to say it all goes back to "that one night," and that is, when it’s all said and done, how just about every rumor around Singleton took its lead. "That one night" fated never to be forgotten, certain details invariably were dredged up and rekindled, were remembered in the course of nights like this. These nights, if truth be told, *let* the town remember.

With all the predictability of a character actor, the park burst forth with expression on such nights. The swings would fly with the wind, with no apparent destination other than wherever they found themselves at the moment. The springs would bounce violently, up and down, as if battered about by the most belligerent child. The slide would seize with demonic forces enough to petrify any bystander.

One such rumor has it that a car had been picked up and violently hurled into a shed. No one was killed, they say, with the exception of a dog. Despite the dearth of casualties, it was still somewhat incomprehensible. A wind with all that force just wasn’t normal, unless there had been something like a tremendous storm of sort. And a wind capable of tossing about a car? Absolutely unheard of. Except in Singleton.

Everyone had some story from "that one night," and each story shared some connection. What was missing was the consistency inherent to any story. But the fact remained that no one actually knew exactly what had happened that night. No one except me.

We were walking home from a high-school football game. We had played our nemesis, the town of Mandon. The game had gone well, meaning that we had won. Me and a buddy of mine, we were planning to meet up with a couple of young ladies at the burger-dive three blocks over from the stadium. Things were definitely looking up for us.

We arrived around 9 o'clock and slid into our usual booth. The girls were crying, bawling their eyes out with intense emotion, not the way they ordinarily do. Something devastating had happened, and I just knew this couldn't be good. As I looked one in the eyes and she started to scream, she waved a piece of paper in her hand. She was glaring at it, her eyes filled with hate. She screamed long and hard at the top of her lungs, like

she was pulling everything she had out of her. She could be heard from blocks away, of that much I was sure.

Her friend joined in, screaming bloody murder, with tears pouring. This sight sent chills down my spine. I shook, not knowing what to do. The very two girls we loved were there before us, emotionally dying before our very eyes, pouring every ounce of energy they had left into this intense display of expressions.

They couldn't stop. They wouldn't stop. It got cold, and the wind started to blow. I shook from the shock, from the bitter chill of the deadly night. Not good, the setting was full of character. It was time to figure this out. I took a deep breath, then another, inhaling and exhaling. I grabbed the paper, I was ready to read and then…

"Sorry to interrupt you, Todd, but everyone else has passed out. What'ya say we go grab us some more weenies and smores before this fire dies down and then call it a night?" Ron asked.

"Dude, what the hell? It was just getting good."

"Do ya want a weenie er not?" Ron yelled as he walked to the tent.

"Screw it. Grab me a beer on the way over."

Fiimaan illaah

"Go kill yourself," Rinker said to her ignorantly.

She replied with a simple "'kay," followed by a "Well, see what happens, fucker!"

"I couldn't get that lucky," he replied.

"I hope you get shot and die so that I won’t ever see your face again!" She let loose.

Five months later: "Taliban are operating in Iraq. Americans troops have no idea what kind of an anthill they're sitting on," *CBC Newsworld’*s Scott Taylor says.

It gets so fucking hot in this desert, Rinker thought to himself. No wonder these damn towel heads are so pissed off! He took some enjoyment at the joke and laughed to himself.

Hell, any kind of laughter helped when you find yourself stuck in the middle of a war against terrorism. He still couldn't really put his finger on the meaning of this war, but he did know it paid well. And the benefits, a lot of them, he wasn’t about to let go to waste. In other words, he was using Uncle Sam. Still, when push comes to shove, he laid his life on the line, same as any military man.

Eight troops were sent on a private mission to check out an abandoned building along the eastern shore. Soldiers liked these kinds of assignments; it gave them a chance to get away from the rest of the crew and "piss around" for a bit--not to mention that acquiring clearance to an abandoned building didn't seem like anything too complex.

"Get your ass moving, soldier!" Rinker's Officer yelled.

He found himself a mere three feet behind his squad, caught for the moment in a daydream that hadn't crossed his mind in months. An old girlfriend from back home and something she had said to him. Just a daydream. He confronted death each and every day, so he found it kinda absurd to get lost over an insignificant piece of ass. But that’s just they way things are. It gets lonely in the desert. Thoughts pour in every bit as fast as the sweat pours out.

Normally, a girl wouldn't cross his mind during times of war. She would have been erased long ago, along with everything else non-essential in the here and now. Yet, somehow, she had managed to sneak back into his brain and find a place for herself alongside fear, agony, and thoughts of death. He forced himself to focus on the mission, she vanished, and he smiled.

"Formation!”

The men lined up and prepared to search the premises. Two started with the front door, ready to "knock the ‘sum’bitch’ off its God-damn hinges," soldier-speak for “knock the door down.” One swift, powerful kick from the man on the right did just that, leveling the door on the floor almost instantly. "See what the Army taught me!" he said through a cocky grin. He followed his words with a gruff snigger.

Hollow-tip bullets rang through the area. Someone had opened fire, and American troops scattered for cover.

"That God-damn building!” the officer screamed, “…full of Taliban soldiers! It’s coming from the second floor by the f…."

Words ceased. A single bullet pierced his jugular, bathing his gun in a dark red gloss.

Rinker shot his rifle as accurately, as consistently as was possible, picking off enemy soldiers right and left. The Taliban seemed to drop quickly; American troops were dropping just as fast. Instinctively, he recognized the probable outcome, but he kept on firing. "Son of a bitch!" He screamed as a hollow-tip bullet pierced his arm. "I'm okay!"

Another ten minutes of intense action and the loss of half a dozen American soldiers, and the gunfire ceased. It was good to be alive, and Rinker was every bit as grateful for his life as the next man. In the distance, two other men were alive. Still crouching on the ground, one yelled, "Are they dead?"

"Believe so," another replied.

Rinker swiped his brow in relief.

The men stood up, cautiously, and began to enter the doorway. As they maneuvered passed the stiff bodies of several Taliban, to the left of the entrance, and began inspecting, Rinker took the lead. "We look clean, boys," he said.

"It's ’bout damn time," a soldier replied.

"No shit," another added.

As a soldier appeared, jumping from the staircase above, and raised his rifle to shoulder level, Rinker instinctively responded with a blast to his chest. "Nice gun work, dude," someone ragged.

"Aww, nothin' to it. Now, let's finish this mission."

After scouting the entire premises, they were finally ready for some relief. Boy, did it ever feel good.

They could see and feel the lazy afternoon sun shine through the door, even as they made their exit. It was impossible to wipe the grins from their faces. The only things heard against the barren backdrop of an Iraqi sky were the howling of a fierce desert wind and hawks scavenging in the distance. And an automatic M16 unleashed into the remaining three American soldiers.

"Fiimaan illaah," said El-Narongi Etahi, a gun-articulate Taliban soldier.

## My Demonic Seizure

Intense flames circle my soul as I am hurdling blood hungry demons. Their faces project portraits of death and sorrow, an appealing image for their evil maker. Maintaining footing in this battle is almost impossible, due to the large mass of bodies lying twisted and tangled on the ground. Sides rage violently and this is no longer a mercurial conflict; this is a full blown, blood driven War.

I continue to dodge carefully through this disgusting scene, but soon enough, find myself overtaken by a strong force. This force is demanding and detrimental to my life, my survival dangles on a sting.

I feel that my heart has been stolen and hurled fiercely into a receptacle containing the devils blood, 100% poison. It seems to be soaking into my bloodstream, causing serious hallucinations and demonic feelings inside my brain. My mind and soul have now become tainted from what one may consider "normal."

Inside my mind, an internal war is raging heavily. I become uneasy, imagining the conclusion of this non mercurial, evil rendezvous.

"Have I become delirious?" I ask myself. "Will this internal war ever seize?"

My eyes roll back and I begin to drift...

Suddenly, I am whirled to my knees by a demandingly evil force. I notice the blood dripping off the tips of my eye lashes.

"Save my soul!" I scream to the heavens, but I know god has turned his back on me.

I will soon learn to accept the facts.

As I start to drift into sweet comatose I am awoken with disruption, once again. I am being attacked. I can feel the devils warm, steamy breath permeate my soul, sending goose bumps down my neck, almost instantly.

After hours of restlessness I finally find relaxation, a feeling I thought I would never be obtain again. I lay my head down onto this velvet pillow and dream of an imaginary paradise.

"This feeling is sensational, almost orgasmic." I think to myself.

Concluding that the frightening war was only a dream, I produce a smile, followed by the feeling of relief. Venturing my way back to reality pleases me and I timidly reminisce on the horrible struggle and the feelings produced from it.

Expressing the experience is a must. I decide to spend some time with the ole' keyboard and word pad. The same two items I vent to, so passionately, each evening.

“My two best friends are my keyboard and word pad.” I think to myself.

Caught in the depth of this irritating realization, something else jerks my mind; I have never owned a velvet pillow.

Immediately, I hurl my body to an upright position. I feel my muscles spasm and twitch at the fright. I try to conclude again, searching for an explanation, but only find that I am in a foreign place. Violent shakes welcome my body as I closely observe the surroundings. Due to the speed and quick shifting of the walls, I can only catch a short, blurry glimpse.

The walls have seemed to reduce their rotation and my shakes become manageable. Once again, I try to observe the surroundings. To

the left side of me I see my mother and two sisters weeping profusely. I tilt my head down at the sight and let my stomach fight the sickening feeling.

I now look to the right side and see my father weeping as well. Each direction I turn seems to make a deeper dent in my soul, simultaneous blows. As a door appears in front of me, I see an older woman slowly advance out of it. It is my grandmother.

She begins to walk towards me, slowly yet progressively. She has a smile on her face, the type of smile a proud grandmother produces. I understand that she is dead and dealing with the fact that she still continues to walk towards me, full of life, forces me to turn my back on her.

“I’m sorry.” I whisper.

"Where the hell am I?" I let out in a screeching, mournful yelp.

As I put my hands over my eyes, shock forces an instant halt. I am on the verge of panic, but I try to fight it as a new observation makes me ill. I feel blood drip down my fingers from my eyeless sockets.

“I am a prisoner locked inside a tormented mind.” I yell. “In the bondage of an ill cranium I reside, without chances for release.”

I begin to breathe rapidly, unable to stop, heart beating with massive intensity. I become delusional, almost certain that I can hear the beat of my heart echo through my inners.

"Could I be approaching a heart attack?" I scarcely think to myself.

I place my hands on my heart and halt as my chest introduces me to a gaping hole on the left side. Inside the hole lies my frozen heart. I gently pull it out of my chest, place it in Gods hands, and watch him free my soul.

## Thomas' Confusion

Braidwood was a small and quiet, some would say a “boring” town in Illinois, located not far from Coal City. Coal City was where all the kids would go to have fun on the weekends. It was a ritual to venture over to Coal City each Friday or Saturday evening and spend the usual three dollars on the latest flick. Thomas was no exception.

In 1999, Thomas Stevens had been a freshman at Braidwood High School. It was Friday. Thomas was looking forward to the end of school so that he could make his way to Coal City and watch the newest release, something called *Fight Club*. He and his friends had talked all week about how "sweet" the movie sounded, and he could hardly wait to see it. It started at 8:30, sharp, and he wouldn't miss it for the world.

Seventh period was Thomas’ last class for the day. Mrs. Graper was his teacher, and world history, his least favorite subject. He conscientiously slept through this class, and Mrs. Graper was none too fond of what she perceived as his disrespectful lack of attention to the important matters at hand. In fact, she had her own ritual in which she retaliated against his obvious disinterest: she’d cause him to rise to attention as she woke him

up by cracking her yardstick across his desk. She always frightened him. And she found a certain pleasure in that fear.

Eight gunmen walked into Braidwood High School with semi-automatic assault riffles. Pistols were tucked here and there throughout their apparel, just in case those big bad machine guns somehow failed in slaughtering the innocent victims they gunned for. The masked assailants split into four groups and began walking in opposing directions, obviously having rehearsed their plan several times before they attempted its execution.

Two of the men immediately headed toward the main office to herd together the faculty and staff. That done, they ordered the principal to announce a Code Red drill in progress. All doors were ordered locked, and all cellular phones shut off and handed to the teachers.

The other six men went to their stations at the three main exits, making certain as they did so that there were no escapees. Following the announcement, these six assembled themselves at the main office.

They had a list of people who would die today. The list included the full names of each student and the classes they would be in at this particular period. The gunmen compared attendance records, making certain their victims were present, and collected the necessary classroom keys. Then, they summarily killed the office staff, everyone save the principal.

A second announcement went out over the intercom informing teachers that certain students would need to report to the office. They were instructed to wait until they were collected at the door to their classroom, and from there they would be accompanied to the office.

After the principal made this final announcement he, too, was shot.

Sixteen students were assembled and brought to the main office. Thomas Stevens was among those herded together. He stood there shaking, frightened. He could foresee no chance for survival in the face of such insanity. This was the end, he knew as much, but that did not make it any easier a pill to swallow.

Suddenly, *Fight Club* seemed somewhat less pressing.

Survival, however, was now at the top of his list.

As one gunman lined the students up, eight each against two walls, another addressed each individually, asking each for a name. Each was then asked just what life might have in store.

Each responded with a frightened, pointedly honest answer. Each summary of goals and expectations was answered by a bullet to the skull and, as if an after-thought, punctuated with a snide chuckle of a sort from the killer.

The gunman made his way to Thomas, who had been standing against the second wall. Witnessing the deaths of eleven others before

him, he swallowed hard, a personal acknowledgment if nothing else that his life was coming to an end. "Maybe it'll be quick," he thought to himself.

"What about you, boy? What do you plan to do?" The gunman's words made him cringe.

"I want to live." Thomas said in a frightened voice.

"Oh, you want to live, eh?"

"Yes, please…"

Thomas woke from a horrifying nightmare, his face buried in a pile of drool on his green notebook. He had never felt such relief to be in that same irritating class. As he cocked his head, pulling himself from out of the wetness with a smile somewhere between satisfaction and gratitude, he felt his skull explode, instantaneously. A single blow from an assault rifle repositioned the remains of his head atop the lap of the young woman behind him.

A sickening laugh rang out.

"…and you're next, missy."

The whine of an alarm clock in the distance made its presence heard as it pierced the brisk morning air and as Thomas shot up from his sweat-drenched pillow.

**I** find myself relaxing in my thinking chair, trying to remember instances of the past, the things in my life that have been significant, or have created some sort of dent in my brain. The things that are powerful enough, inescapable to my mind, the things relevant to me and the person that I have become. These memories help me to realize what makes Brandon Lockhart.

**T**he dedicated, church-going mother that I was created from helped me to realize why I have acquired the morals and values that I obtain.

A Sunday to Remember

As the sun shines bright through my old window blinds, I am introduced to a crisp Sunday morning. At eight-years-old, I am ornery as can be. I bellow out a yawn, long and aggressive, making a definite sound throughout the house. I hear giggling and "chitter-chatter" coming from the bathroom, my mother and two sisters are already up and kicking.
"Oh boy" I think to myself.

I struggle to pull myself out of bed but succeed, barely. I felt almost brilliant for taking a shower the previous night, knowing I had twenty more minutes to sleep than the rest of the crew. I smirk with cocky pleasure.

I make way to my closet and fully clothe myself, something feasible for the regular Sunday morning church service. As I waltz out of my

bedroom, I decide to make a detour towards the bathroom, instead of heading straight to the kitchen like usual. Just then, I approach my family full of girls, with a grouchy stare.

"God, you always take forever" I ignorantly project towards them.

"Go away" they yell; a phrase commonly spurted at me when I was being irritating.

I make my way down the stairs and the first item I notice is the fish tank, our twenty-gallon fish tank. The fish are alive and swimming lively throughout the tank. I giggle and shuffle towards them with a mischievous smile on my fresh morning face.

My parents aren’t present at this point, so petting these slimy creatures is acceptable. I decide to watch them first. I sit directly in front of the tank, almost as if I am studying my prey. I smile and slightly bounce on the floor, the way any eight-year old child would have. I begin to stand to my feet, but before I can make it to that point, I am bombarded with surprise.

The fish tank that holds my beloved friends is collapsing on top of me. I have recklessly forgotten that I was told not to play with it (the common forgetfulness each eight-year-old boy obtains), due to its uncommon three legged stands. As the tank slowly falls on top of me, it shatters across my fore arms. Blood and smelly fish set the mood.

Shedding tears is irrelevant for me, I am tough, or so I assume. My family runs downstairs after hearing the loud clatter, overwhelmed with shock and hesitation. I know I'm not hurt severely, just enough to position me in the hospital, but they still scream. A few butterfly stitches maintain my wounds efficiently.

I find that skipping church because of a few cuts and scrapes is still unacceptable; at least it is unacceptable when you're the child of a religious mother, such as mine. As I sit in church that day, I think long and hard about the previous accident, realizing that I have acquired a newfound love for hating fish.

“Amen!” I think to myself, and smile at the irony

## The significance of *the Code*

They say a real gangster will die for his colors, since a true gangster knows where his family is, and that's with his fellow gang members. They say that a real mob boss never cracks under pressure, since a mob boss worth his salt will never fold and has true gangster blood flowing through his veins.

Nothing ran thicker than Anthony Barton's blood.

Anthony Barton, a.k.a. "Tone,” was a Chicago mob boss for the South Side Crooks back in 1987. He was six feet tall, with dark brown hair and penetrating blue eyes. At 36, he was a big man, still very fit and still ready for war. His wife had died in a shootout at the Northbrook Housing

Projects about four years earlier. His life hadn’t been easy, in spite of all that money, the street fame, and all the white candy he'd ever be able to dream about. His son was all he had left, his final chance for a future, a legacy, something lasting. He was smart and held his own, that was true, but Ronny had no clue of his father’s expectations for him.

Ronnie Barton was 15 years old, an only child. He was a bright young man who excelled academically. The spitting image of his father, minus about five inches, he had never known money to be a problem for his family. He got what he wanted, and that was that. His father spoiled him, his father loved him, and he loved his father. He was always number one when it came to Pops. Well, number one, behind Pops’ work and busy lifestyle. Besides work, when he was home, Ronnie was the spotlight.

Of course, he didn't know what his father did, and he didn't really see any pressing need to know. His father was a very popular man with a decent amount of money. He had an idea that he might have once been involved in some "dirty work." And since they had guns all around the house, he just assumed that violence might have played some small part in his father’s "career." Besides, he liked the look of the guns. They *looked* powerful.

"Powerful. That’s what I’ll be, powerful. I will be powerful when I get older," he reminded himself.

"How do you suggest we handle the situation, Tone?" Duke Pantoja asked in a curious voice, hoping not to hear the inevitable answer.

"Duke, ole buddy, my pal, let’s not be stupid! Think abouddit. This s.o.b.’s done stole money from de' ole shop, and now he wants to do business? I tell ya just how we'll solve it. We cap ’em!" Tone replied.

"…as you wish. Ya want me to get some shooters?"

"Nah, not on this one, Duke. Not on this one . . ."

"Ya gun' handle ’em yourself?"

"Ya see, it's that respect thang. I don't like when people play with my money. You understand?"

"I understand."

"I'm gonna blow the rat's head off, Duke. That's what I'm gun' ado."

"Tone, you know he's gun' send a middle man. He ain’t gun' come all by himself."

"Then he will have one less middle man. Let it be a lesson to ’em and any comrades working for the scandalizing cock-sucker!"

Tone went home that evening and had his usual chat with his boy.

"Hey, Ronnie, how's school goin'? Ya still makin' honor roll?"

"It's goin' good, and sure, I'm on honor roll. I've been on since third grade. You know that. Why’s it gonna change now?"

"Everyone's a smart ass, ain’t they?"

On the surface, their conversations weren't really all loving and that kind of stuff, but they both knew one thing for certain: you read the love between the lines.

"Listen, I got a meeting tonight, so what're you gun' be doin'? Need some cash?" Tone didn’t beat around the bush.

"Goin' over to Tim's. His dad's cookin' brots and weenies, and I been lookin' forward to it all week. Besides, I'm still holding that three grand you gave me last week," Ronnie replied from behind an arrogant smile.

"You know, you just ain’t got any idea how lucky you got it, kid."

"I know. I know, Pops. Children in Africa, blah blah."

"Yeah…and seven miles through the snow without any shoes….Yeah, I'm headin' out. Be good."

"Okay, I'm leavin', too."

"All right. See you tonight. Be home by 12…and I mean 12!"

"Uh huh."

Tone's face betrayed one expression when he loaded his revolver. Joy. He knew his mission. In his eyes, this job wasn't about murder; it was about finances and a little something called payback. "Payback’s a bitch!" He said aloud as he cocked his gun.

He had already spoken with the commander of the small south side group called the S. S. Doolies. Tone had given the man two things, a good price on a kilo of cocaine and an impression that they were about to do

some business. He knew it was inevitable that they would send over a middle man. "Ain’t no boss that stupid," he thought to himself.

Tone took his ’83 Benz down the highway on his way to meet a couple of his cronies about a block from their drop. They would meet there and proceed on foot down the ally where they would do business. Tone pulled in and parked his car.

"Ya'll ready for action?" Tone asked, the fire in his eyes ablaze.

"You got it."

"Now, ya'll keep your eyes peeled. Don't let no dirty bastard shoot me in the back, ya hear?"

"Nah, Tone, we're your guardian angels tonight."

In fact, he knew that all of these men would take a bullet for him. He knew he was that well respected in these parts. He wasn't worried, at least not about that. The only worry on his mind involved the police. He felt certain they could escape before any cops made it to the scene. But if they couldn't, he knew a quick bribe would do the trick. If the past were anything to believe in, he knew he could hope.

He began walking down the alley, duffle bag in hand. His men crouched behind the bushes, keeping a close view of the circumference. He saw a figure approach from about 20 feet ahead. They continued to walk toward one another. His heart was pumping. He knew that the sucker at the opposite end of the alley had no idea what was in store for him, but

that wasn’t really important now.  Tone did, and that was all that mattered. He managed the slightest of smiles.

He had promised the gang a murder tonight.

And a murder it would be. Everyone went about praising Tone on the particularly brutal nature behind their plan for retaliation. Everyone in the gang had been notified, so each could produce a perfect alibi. His gang would be completely removed from any notions of murder or conspiracy. Tone knew you couldn't just talk about a murder and then puss out. He discouraged "talk without the walk." A man’s gotta live by the codes. And the codes of the gang ran as deep and as proud as the blood in his veins.

His victim stopped and he stopped.

He recognized the face.

He remembered the code.

Tone leveled his revolver and took aim.

"Dad, don't shoot!" Ronnie’s plea betrayed his fear.

A shot from Tone's black revolver echoed against the blackness that was the Chicago sky.

Ronnie fell to the ground, his skull shattered.

Tone, too, fell to the ground, his heart shattered. He wept openly, his tears puddling around him as his own blood on the ground. But even as his tears mingled with the blood of his own son, he knew there had been no betrayal. He could not, would not defy the code.

**W**hen doing something inerasable, like getting a tattoo or writing a book, “they” say it’s always a bad idea to show dedicated love for someone, knowing there’s a possibility that it won’t last.

**I**’ve decided to go against the grain on this one. This next piece is for my girl-friend (you know who you are). If one day our relationship acquaints the rocks, I can always remember the effort I was able to produce, and everything I did to create a significant relationship.

I STAND Up; My Promise to you

I awaken from a soft dream, a dream so vibrant and radiant with compassion and love, that my heart produces a smile. Of course, you were the subject of my dream. You seem to find your way into my head often and I don't mind. Your love for me is something hard to turn away from and I am addicted.

Like an addict strives for his drug, I strive for you.

"Why don't they create some sort of love rehab?" I think to myself.

I have seen just as many people go crazy over the separation of a loved one as I have any unstable drug head. But once again, this is all through my perspective. My thoughts and the world’s thoughts don’t always coincide.

Every person faced with a long-term separation from his or her loved one knows it will not be easy. Usually the individual is faced with two options: let go or hold on. I have chosen to hold on, the most difficult path, might I add. But, in the long run, if traveled successfully, the outcome is greater.

I want to have a wife and children, some day. I have pretty big dreams for my life, larger than most. I want to take her with me and spoil her to death. I long to hold her each evening before she closes her beautiful green eyes and welcomes slumber.

We talk of our future quite a bit these days and it makes her giddy. I love to see her giddy. When her face lights up and her eyes open wide, a smile protrudes with that look of passion, yet uncertainty. She plans to be my wife someday, and with a look so compelling, it's impossible to deny her.

At the age of nineteen it would be more than acceptable to label me foolish for the way that I talk. I refuse to defend myself against this stereotype, because we all know nothing said will change the assumptions. Instead, I will not listen.

"After all, is being stereotyped that bad if the people stereotyping you are irrelevant to your life?" I wonder. I learn to enjoy the thought.

I have started praying these days. I find that talking to my creator on a regular basis is actually quite soothing. I am a believer, so it may do

more for me than those who don't. I frequently ask the lord for wisdom in my life and this relationship, I pray to make it last. God, do I want to make it last.

Eventually, after so many women, a man acquires a desire for love. I never thought I would find a woman that could completely satisfy me, I was wrong. She is my girl friend, my confidant, and my best friend. She plays so many roles in my life. She is the subject of my cares and my outlet when I'm down.

She is leaving me, soon.

"How will I cope?"

She plays a huge role in my life.

"My life will derail," I so often think to myself.

She gets so upset when I think like that because she feels the same way and we must both stay strong.

As the man of this relationship, I know what I must do. I shed my feeling for you in this piece of passionate writing. I stand stall and prepare to stay strong. I will guide us through this journey; this is my promise to you.

## An American Love Story

Mid-August in Junction City is normally as nice and warm a day, with just a hint of a cool breeze, as you could ever want in Kansas. August 16 of this year seemed even more radiant than usual. The sun beat equally

down on all surroundings and the breeze was just enough, and even, to keep everything cool. Clouds did as they normally do in August in Kansas, soaring as shadows across the sky and scattering brilliant rays of light across the land below.

"What a beautiful day for a proposal," Cadence Mercer thought to himself. “A beautiful day, indeed.”

Cadence was now 18 years old and had attended the local high school for four years. He had set his sights on going to Illinois Valley Community College in Ogelsby, if for no more pressing reasons than it was easy to get into and he had family that lived in the area. He had, of course, arrived at his decision with the supervision of his girlfriend, who would herself be attending IVCC.

An only child from a healthy home, he stood proudly at 6'1” with a dark, somewhat controlled mane. Taken together, his slender body and handsome smile, his dark eyes and his clean-shaven look, he was quite the catch. He was also an amazing baseball player. But he had decided some years earlier to give it all up so he could spend his extra time with Zowey. Zowey was, as everyone knew in these parts, the girl of his dreams.

She was also 18 years old. Zowey Rinker had also been a student at Junction City High School. At 5'6”, she wore her golden-blonde hair long, with a deliberate part on the left side. She had green eyes and a radiant

smile. But it was her curves, the type that made every horny red-blooded bystander at school go crazy, that made her stand out.

She played volleyball and she played it well. Despite the many scholarships at hand, she had decided to attend IVCC. She had based this decision on a series of compromises. First, there was the compromise between her and the boyfriend. She also figured she could collect financial aid, and, well, to be honest, for the occupation that she desired, there was little real reason to attend anything like an excellent school. She wanted to be a school teacher. She wanted nothing else.

As of today, they had officially been dating for three years, and he was getting antsy. Cadence had been planning his proposal all day. He was completely head over heels for Zowey, and he just knew she felt the same way about him.

He had already made plans to pick her up at 6:30 to do as they always did, to "spend time." Little did she know, it was going to be a very memorable evening for both of them.

"I'm getting tired of these dull razors," Cadence said out loud, hoping his mother would hear his complaint and do something about it. After no reply, he yelled, "Mom, I need new razors!"

"And *I* need a new car," she yelled back.

Rolling his eyes, he cleansed his face with warm water, applied ample aftershave, and waltzed to his bedroom.

He put on his finest outfit with hopes of impressing someone he so deeply loved. After being with someone for three years, somewhere along the line, a guy stops caring about his appearance. But tonight, he cared.

His ’96 Buick Skylark turned over without hesitation. "It's gonna be a good night," he said to himself with a cocky grin. On his way to Zowey’s house, he found himself newly infatuated with the scenery. Somehow, the sky looked wonderful and for the first time he noticed an especially beautiful landscape of nicely manicured shrubs and flowers in front of a house he had passed at least a million times a week. "I should open my eyes more often," he thought. “I’ll remember and do that.”

Zowey’s house was large and highlighted most noticeably with its burgundy brick. She sat there, swinging in her porch swing, as she waited for him. He passed her distinctive barn mailbox with its sign that read "Rinkers" and proceeded up her long gravel driveway.

Her smile grew bigger as she ran to his car.

"Hey, baby!" She yelled.

He responded with the lovable but predictable, "Hello to you, my sweetie pie."

"Where are we going?"

"To be honest, I have no idea. Somewhere where we can be alone perhaps?" She smiled at the idea.

He pulled into a secluded area some five miles south of town.

"This is my uncle’s old garage. We can park here."

"Cadence, I don't want to sweat,” she said with that whiny tone of hers that he knew too well. “You know it’s going to get hot in there." And with that, she managed to get her way.

"I do have air conditioning, ya know."

She smiled, nodding politely. "So, why do you want to be alone?"

"Did you think I would forget? You know our anniversary means the world to me," he said, his robust voice spilling over with passion. She was so charmed that she began to blush.

The garage was old but still in decent shape. The door was manual and maintained a coat of white paint old enough to be chipping away. It wasn't quite the image he had in mind for the day he "popped the question," but it would do.

He had stepped out of his white Buick to walk over to the garage door. It glided up without hesitation but fell back almost instantly. He tried it again. It did the same.

"Damn it to hell," he said, and on the third try, it latched. "Finally!" Cadence said as he re-entered the car.

"Troubles?" She questioned.

"Lil' bit. Thanks for the help."

"I told you I didn't want to get sweaty. Not on our special day, baby." They smiled at one another. He pulled his car in.

"Cadence, turn on the air," she whined.

"Yes, of course, my queen. Okay, baby listen, I want to have a serious talk with you."

"Okay. What about?"

"We have been dating for three years now, and I think that we are meant for one another. I love you with everything in me. I think these feelings are mutual, but if they aren't, then I need to know now."

"You are just so sweet! You know I feel the same way about you. Cadence, I will love you fore…."

"…Marry me!" He interjected, quickly, with a stern but loving voice. "I want to be with you forever. I want to start a family with you. I want to get married."

"I do," she said without forethought or hesitation.

"What do you mean by ‘you do?’ You do what? You will marry me?"

"Yes! I will marry you!"

The conversation continued. They spoke mostly about the wedding and all the preparations. He had mentioned that financial aid would help them out a lot more because they would be married.

They talked about how they would tell their parents and what they might think. They had promised each other the future and it was finally their time to linger in it. Now, it was appropriate to speak of those thoughts

about marriage and family that they so secretly harbored. It felt great to them, and it felt right. And it was right.

"Baby, listen, that's our song! Turn it up!" She yelled, but with a voice full of happiness and joy.

"Oh, it is!" They began to sing to each other, even as they stared deep into each other’s eyes. That night, they were invincible. They were in love, and they screamed at the top of their lungs. They screamed a song they called their own.

In Cadence's mind, he knew with absolute certainty that this was right. He had no doubts about being honest. They had never been unfaithful. Their relationship was a loving one that had grown with the years.

Later, sometime the following evening, the local newspaper headline would tell another story.

"CARBON MONOXIDE KILLS TWO TEEN LOVERS!"

An old garage and its sticky door would stand as a monument to their fatal future.

Mrs. Neistradt is an English teacher for the Shelbyville High School, and a good teacher at that. An inspiring woman to me, she

always told me of my potential. We used to sit in class and do journals, each day a different one about a subject of her choice.

This specific piece was created from a journal in that class. I found interest in it and elaborated to create a short story. *The Detrimental Chill*, a piece born my senior year in 2006, published for the public in January of 2007, I obtain the “Neistradt impact.”

THE DETRIMENTAL CHILL

As this icy air makes numerous rounds into my lungs, I feel weak. Nausea and an uneasy restlessness set in. I can think of nothing more stressful in my life than this precise moment. These sickening feelings intricately pull at me as insanity takes control.

"Hello, insanity!" I exclaim. I begin to smile at this uneasy debate between life and death, now turning from humorous outrage to utter and total awareness. After some 10 seconds or so, this feeling gives way to a cold, brutal reality. I brainstorm only to conclude that reality is no longer worthy of remark. Reality is no more than a bluebird atop my windowsill, now gone, and leaving me alone. I am alone, cold, and abandoned to this broken state of mind.

Confidence is an acquired trait from the past. My mind and body no longer recognize each other, no more function together, and I simultaneously recognize this myself. I shake fiercely, my body twitching

and fluctuating with spasms so ill-defined that I become certain both that Death is searching for me and that I am providing my own maps into such uncharted territory. No, Death is not casually looking for me, either. Death is on the prowl, relentlessly striving to lay waste my mind, body, and soul of every ounce of satisfaction to which I have ever laid claim. Every happy moment I may have celebrated, now brutally erased from my memory, as demonic power overwhelms.

This Satan, my hell-bound democracy, this evil entity decapitates my life and smiles at my internal bloodshed, as I mentally bleed mental tears of blood. The wind picks up, and I hear a loud noise in the distance. I stop for a moment, letting the chill blow in my face cold. Hoping to find some sort of paradise, relaxed, I lay claim to nothing but dull, frozen hurt and sorrow. I do not cry because my tears will freeze. And I refuse, absolutely refuse, to leave behind something as precious and delicate as a tear to the likes of this soul-craving, winter wonderland.

I am almost there now, almost in a calm state, as relaxation sets in and my eyes droop. I am tired but aware—aware of this frozen hell and its almost certain promises. I formulate a vague plan. I convince myself.

I begin this journey, fighting, stubborn as an ox. I plan. I shall pull myself onto my knees; try with every ounce of energy in me to stand up. I try to walk, to create a friction deep within my joints that might provide warmth for my deprived body.

I move each limb, and as I do so, I gain confidence enough to confront the next step. I drag my legs from beneath myself. I rise to my feet slowly. Completing these tasks, I acquire confidence.

"As weak as the ice you produce, you ignorant hunter," I scream to the frozen sky above me. "You disgust me!"

Overjoyed with accomplishment, I now smile wildly, and I think of all that I will do when I return home. I think of my wife, our children. My love and compassion for my family know no limits. I accept my blessings graciously.

My kneecap splits open in two different places, one bone breaking open the side of my leg and the other shredding my internal quads. Sharpening pain proves crushing, fatal. Falling to my face, my body breaks; my heart is broken. Ultimately, I am deceased.

Since I was a young boy I have been writing poetry. I always acquired a calm and therapeutic state, while writing poems. The vast diversity of poems and endless pieces to be created left me in awe.

**S**tarting off easy, learning short rhyme schemes, and then moving towards poems with more complexity. Free Verse was always my favorite because it offered full emotional expression without the capabilities to judge. There was no such thing as an incorrect Free Verse poem, and I loved it.

## Velvet Pillow

Oh velvet pillow, for upon you I rest carelessly

Oh comfort square, for upon you my head rest comfortably

Significant as ever, you hold disguised intentions

Oh velvet pillow, where do you reside?

My body rest mediocre but my head rest exceeds

You symbolize comfort but your true colors bleed

Oh velvet pillow, why must you deceive?

You lead my mind astray to the point of no retrieve

Oh pillow owner, why must you hunt my soul?

You've corrupt my mind many times and now I am cold

Oh velvet pillow, once I loved you so

But oh velvet pillow, its time to let you go

## Dreams Inert

Bellow, bellow, bellow, I shall, into the Northern Sky.

I speak a softened, tendered speech, into the Northern Sky.

Days dreamt, day dreams, deliberately drifting,

the plentiful sky above.

Days dreamt, day dreams, deliberately drifting, into the Northern Sky.

Plentiful colors seizure the mind, obtaining a mental high.
Appealing feelings, emotional healings, time seize tonight.
Demonic feelings, corrupt emotions, deleted upon attendance.
Pleasure obtained, I remain slain,
through my eyes, the Northern Sky.

Departed from earth, sky is my turf, longing and wishing to fly.
Dreaming with meaning, heartfelt singing, demanding a single try.
Up on this ledge, longing to clench a life defying desire.
Off of the land, reality lands, I meet the ground and die.

Obtaining true feeling, dreamt through the ceiling,
it appeared a legitimate try.
Death's cold slumber, hath not puncture.
Forever, dreaming the Northern Sky.

I find myself going about each day, various rhyme schemes bouncing through my head, rhyme schemes that have no specific order. I enjoy writing in this manner, going outside of the box, and "toying" with the rules.

# Alone and in my zone

I am all alone and in my zone

No destination, no significant home

Deep thoughts, translations not needed

Understandings irrelevant so ill keep proceeding

A gift from god, don't underestimate this mind

I'll run laps around you, with this significant mind

Deadly to those who must test this cranium

Attack you swift, seep into your mind, like uranium

My limits are none; you can’t predict this empire

I will burn down your soul like the Chicago wildfire

As I begin to go deeper inside of my brain

I will switch the tone, try to maintain

Happiness will be my next destination

Now I am deep in thought, complete concentration

My soul now frolics, from valleys to rivers

Aimless and gently, beauty is all its delivers

As my spirit begins to seizure with colors

entwined and wrapped up with a significant other

Beautiful lights and utter feelings of ease

Laughter, happiness, and the cool summers breeze

Intrigued with this feeling, I refuse it to pass

I steal you forever, now erasing your past

Please fly with me to paradises heaven

Well drop bombs on the devil like its 9-11

HOBO

Aged man walking

I view you from this street

An aged man on foot

As humble as can be

Elderly man pacing

I view your calm manner

Elderly man on foot

I see your careless banner

They badger you profusely

You're unethical to the city

Judged and frowned upon

You're accustomed to the pity

Senior friend on foot

We all stare and wonder

Yet, I see things abroad

I dream of you, but younger

Your insignificant to the people

You tend to fascinate my thoughts

I wonder of the years-long lessons

That you have been taught

Dear aged man

I watch you as you walk

You're clothed in all rags

The people love to gawk

Dear elderly man

You have nothing left to find

Who knew the city’s soul

Would reside inside your eyes?

## Tears of The Unsober Mind

Unsober mind wondering free

The time is now, but you'll never see

To live for this, to live for nothing

Is this feeling hate or is it loving?

Nights alone in the back of my car

Only help me to realize who you are

But where am I, is this just a dream?

My unsober mind wants to be free

As blurs slowly merge together

Due rain is all that's left to weather

Let these tears fall, I'm trapped in emotion

Intoxicants have slowly turned into my potion

I'm unclear who you truly seem to be

I understand it's not you, instead it's me

As I speed down this never ending hill

Please forgive me for all the tears I may spill

Or tears you may spill, as a matter of fact

As my unsober mind derails off this track

## My Expectations

They say they want amazement.

They want my words effect

to cause their heart to stop,

shivers gripping on their neck.

They want my words to heal

all the pain that they forgo.

They want to hear me say the words

that cause a heartfelt blow.

I want to make you skip a beat.

I want your tears to flow.

I use these words aggressively,

giving your heart a fatal blow.

The Lord hath brought deliverance,

this trait I've striven to earn.

I create the mental pictures

and let you watch them burn.

I'm not here to make you happy,

you see, this writing cures my soul.

Without these words I'm insecure,

they help to make me whole.

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"Congratulations Brandon,

on your newest piece.

It's fabulous, I just loved it,

brought me to my knees."

Don't tell me of amazing

until my words delete your life.

I want to see you go in shock,

grab your heart, collapse, and die.

Fate

Thinking, so many thoughts in my head.

Asking and wondering if I was dead.

My car hit a post & I flew through the windshield.

I ejected ten feet and landed in a cornfield.

Tears and blood, we laid on the ground.
I had crashed; there was glass, but not a sound.
All throughout life people fear the last day.
It could be in a year and it could be today.

But lucky for us, needless to say,
my car had died but we both walked away.
A man stopped near and offered a ride.
We both agreed and hopped up inside.

An old Dodge became our escape
from a fiery car; death was its fate.
He smiled at me and began to whistle,
then touched my head with his revolver pistol.

He pulled the trigger, the gun jammed.
I jerked the wheel with my left hand.
Into a ditch; we crashed into a tree.
Back through the windshield & I couldn't see.

I heard a loud blast; it was close to my head.
Then I woke up in heaven and realized I was dead.

God said "Hello, would you like a meal?"

"What happened?" I asked. "This can not be real!"

"You crashed your car and left it tangled,

then got in a truck with one of my angels.

You escaped death; you were meant to die,

so I told Gabriel to erase your life.

He stopped to help you; bring you home to me,

but you jerked the wheel and crashed into a tree.

You killed your wife who was meant to live.

She was supposed to sing, that was her gift.

But so long for that plan, it obviously failed.

And instead of heaven, you can have fun in hell."

I enjoy creating new types of poems, identifying them with my own labels and categorizing them. For instance, the Simplicity and Twisted Simplicity poems are created by me. All the labels really mean is that they have simple rhyme schemes (Simplicity) or simple rhyme schemes with a unique twist at the end (Twisted Simplicity).

The King of this game
(Simplicity)

To hate you, to love you,
what the hell does it mean?
They told you to hate me,
but you’re stuck in between.

You hate me, you love me,
your heart feels the pain
of hating and loving
the King of this game.

I rule all your feelings,
bring them back on a dime.
My smile brings memories
of when you were mine.

My eyes burn your soul,
your insides on fire.
I'm the king of this game,
someone to admire.

The way that I love you,

the way that I don't.

You just want to love me,

but I simply wont.

The happiness created

was wonderful then,

but crushed your poor heart

when it came to an end.

I know that I hurt you.

I'll take the blame.

One day you'll realize,

I'm the king of this game.

## My Best Friend
(twisted Simplicity)

You are so gorgeous,

the way that you move.

So fluent and swift,

your motions so true.

You're slender and sleek.

You always portray me.

And the love that I have

leaves me going crazy.

You write to my soul,

you put me in words.

I love you to death,

is that absurd?

I know that this feeling

is nothing but mental.

But oh how I love you,

my number 2 pencil.

**D**iamante is a certain type of poem that I have found interest in. These poems start and end with opposite words or feelings, very unique. They also portray a diamond, hence the base word of the poem category. There are very specific rules to writing a Diamante poem.

**I** created a Diamante poem that didn't exactly fit under the Diamante category, but almost. Therefore, I categorized it as a Diamantish, yet another category created by me.

**W**hen writing, I feel it completely unnecessary to lose the matter you are writing about because of the rules that should be

followed in the form you are writing in. I promote writing-open-mindedness.

**R**acism
[diamantish]

White

Happy, Love

Established, Standard, Clean

Power, Accepted, Hate, Degrade

Discriminate, Judged, Fein

Different, Dirty

Black

Double Loop, Twist, and Tie
[diamante]

Laughter

Smiling, Giggling

Jumping, Running, Singing

Shoelace, Rock, Face, Ground

Lying, Hurting, Bleeding

Confused, Painful,

Weeping

The Circle of Life
[diamante]

Wake

Born, Cry,

Crawl, Walk, Play,

Job, Money, Car, House,

Age, Sore, Grey,

Pain, Cold,

Sleep

Haiku poems originated from Japan and are meant to be about nature. Modern man has evolved these poems, making the subject about almost anything. I like to present my Haiku's under the subject of nature.

Leaf

Dear leaf, floating swift

Airs friend, sweet sky acrobat

Land on me; exhale

Bloom

You are so naked

Leafless tree you are unclothed

Ugly you are; bloom

This next and final piece may seem quite disturbing. I have realized that in becoming a good poet, you must learn to broaden your horizons. This poem is not based on any individual, or any sort of disgusting dream of mine. This is my horror production, enjoy.

## The Gift

"Good evening sweetheart, you look ravishing.
That outfit you're wearing is clearly astonishing."
I had bought some wine for her, to set the mood.
Not the cheap brand either, this stuff was good.

"Moet?" She questions, as she stares at the label.
"Yeah, the pricey stuff." I exclaim as I place it on the table.
"What's the occasion?" She asks, teeth showing.
"Loves the occasion." By now she is glowing.

"Actually, this is foreplay, I got you a gift."
"You did not!" She exclaims. I kiss her sweet lips.
"I did! Just wait, you'll get it soon.
For now, let's sip wine and stare at the moon."

Small talk keeps her happy with a smile on her face.

She loved our small talk, it made her heart race.

I can't wait for her expression when I give her *the gift*.

I'm sure she'll be happy, her soul might just lift.

"All right, sweetie pie, follow me to the room."

"The room?" She asks. "Yes, the back room."

I kept it in here with the correct preparation.

She follows me back without hesitation.

"Why is there plastic all over the floor?"

"You will love it, come in, and please shut the door."

She does as I say, without thinking twice.

I reenter the room after retrieving more ice.

"Okay close them peepers, you get your surprise!"

"I'm so excited!" She exclaims and closes her eyes.

"Open your mouth, there's something I want you to taste."

And a forty-five pistol goes straight to her face.

Dead on the floor with a hole in her head.

Skull scattered on plastic, painted deep red.

"Oh my! Sweetie pie, you’re all over the floor."

I wrap her in the plastic. "You won’t cheat anymore!"