



# INFINITY'S KITCHEN

Hands top

...d on taking care not to crush any part of it. The soft, glacial current of the str

...to put it in the water?"

...oon into a boat.

...ing and hiding

...e worked. Her eyes followed every word on th

... aunt.

...and after a while he simply gave u

...aunt's hands to his own. Th

...up again. Jack follow

...est down c

...atching out

...o pick it off. His

...newspaper in hand. He

...leaves behind him gave Jack a

...against the ripples made by

...sitting the wet so







*All Caught Up*

*by Jennifer E. Carinci (2004)*

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An Image by Jennifer E. Carinci i

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by Kimberly Hopkins & Andrew Shea

# The Object is the Object

By Dylan Kinnett

It is tempting to begin this, or any editorial, with the phrase “what you hold in your hand” and then to describe that object, the publication. In this case, I’ll succumb to that temptation, to get it out of the way, but also because the object itself is the theme of this issue of Infinity’s Kitchen.

Perhaps this publication is not what you hold in your hand at all, if you are reading it online, but if you are holding this, then you’re in for a treat. We’ve included a paper boat inside the publication. I hope you’ll first take the opportunity to unfold the boat and read Hao Cheng’s delightful story, “Paper Boats”. I also hope you’ll try to fold the boat yourself, because it’s fun!

The story “Saved” is a hypertext, in that it is a nonlinear composition, but it is also a

collection of objects: a receipt, a printed chat log, and a newspaper clipping.

“In Absentia” is about memory and about “channel-surfing” through the memories. The story has been illustrated with the typographical conventions of those channel listings, to highlight that aspect of the story.

The objects in mind here aren’t always of the paper variety. The concrete poem, “A Few Weeks of Light Principle” is a concrete poem where the text is “frustrated” as one would be when trying to assemble furniture. The directions don’t always make perfect sense, in any language. The mind wanders.

You are invited to encounter these objects in any order you like and to make of them what you will.

**Infinity’s Kitchen** is a graphic literary journal of experimental literature. It is published independently, in print and online at [www.infinityskitchen.com](http://www.infinityskitchen.com). This is a place for creative

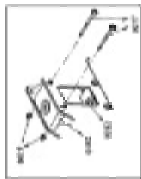
people to cook up new ideas. **The work** featured in this publication is owned by the creator(s) of that work. The photograph used with “In Absentia” was taken by Nate Beal.

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e-mail address. If your work is published, you’ll be paid in the form of contributor’s copies, and of course the rights to your work would remain your own.

# A Few Weeks of Light Principle (Nicks From All Those Dull Razors) By Adam Trice

ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS: ENGLISH



Part	Qty
a. infest (0131)	1
b. adopt (0015)	2
c. spectacular (0019)	2
d. pelvis (0182)	2
e. lethal (0077)	4
f. farthenheit (0457)	1
g. deprivation (0161)	1
h. corsage (0105)	2
i. hors d'oeuvre (0159)	2

- coffee burn, then i got quiet, an angry surprise getting dark, captivated in self help, saturated in the strains of blue moonlight, i felt a little awkward.
- fading fast - the scarcity of solitude, unused candles that you thought ugly and tasteless, sunny with paper cuts in mid june, moss between blue/black sidewalk cracks, collected and indifferent.
- rain, rain, rain, rain, brilliant shrill.
- we had this shaven agenda and chat like that, a trusty travel guide from texaco, ready for the chase down, why i didn't speak up, i will never know.
- somewhere in california by the bare space, misdeeds, average and wonderful, a duflie bag with impersonal needs; shower gel, stopwatch, two pairs of clean underwear, shock but no injuries, still strangers, corrosion-wrapped, the clear rearview, i had a girlfriend and my brother didn't.
- i didn't stop even, that said, a few weeks of light principle, nicks from all those dull razors turned over, i was almost certain about the knickknacks.
- that time we met some curious marijuana users, superior pizza style, christ-thirst for cola, two rule of thumbs up (hit, hit, pass the spliff) spliced and mildly toasted, the smell of running skunkweed and motor oil.
- she asked if i had heard nevada dignified, comfakes, red soil, your old darling molly, do you remember each morning? empty bottles, the pulse of thoughts steady as a metronome, overcast, careless without regrets, lime and seltzer water, has it really been that long?
- something about colors, and dander was not an issue like the train station, and at that moment it was pertinent that we adhere to all accounts of metaphysics.
- scarce, afraid of a laughing life.
- doing well, some money, still young and unable.

\*\*\* INDIFFERENT AND COLLECTED AND NEVER READY AND ALMOST ALWAYS OVERTURNED AND CONFUSED AND CAPTIVATED IN THE DARK AND PULSING CARELESSLY AND FADING AND WAY TOO FAST AND YOUNG AND STILL DANGEROUS AND UNABLE AND DULL AND FAR FROM AND FRUSTRATED AND ALL WRECKED AND RED IN THE FACE AND AWKWARD AND

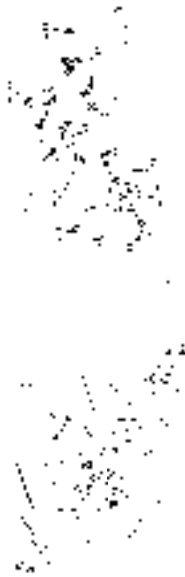
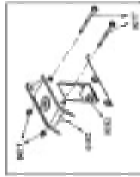
# Een Paar Weken Van Het Licht Beginsel (Nicknames Van Al Di Saaie Scheerapparten)

**MONTAGE-INSTRUCTIES: NEDERLANDS**

Part	Qty
a. infest (0131)	1
b. goedkeuren (0015)	2
c. spectaculaire (0019)	2
d. bekken (0182)	2
e. letale (0077)	4
f. farinheit (0457)	1
g. ontbering (0161)	1
h. corsage (0105)	2
i. hors d'oeuvre (0159)	2

1. koffie branden, vervolgens kreeg hij juistig, een boos verrassing donker, boeien in self help, verzadigd in de stammen van blauwe maanlicht, ik voelde me een beetje lastig.
2. fading snel - de schaarse van eenzaamheid, ongebruikte kaarsen dat je dacht lelijk en smaakloos, zonnig met papier medio juni, mos tussen zwart stoep scheuren, verzameld en onverschillig.
3. regen, regen, regen, regen, briljante schille.
4. we hadden dit shaven agenda en chat graag dat, een betrouwbaar reisgids en texaco roadmap, klaar voor de nacht, waarom ik niet spreken, zal ik nooit weten.
5. ergens in california door de kale ruimte, wandaden, gemiddelde en prachtig, duifle een tas met onpersoonlijke behoeften, douches gel, stopwatch, twee paren van schoen ondergoed, shock, maar geen verwondingen, nog vreemden, corsiole-gekwild, de duidelijke reaview, i had een vriendin en mijn broer niet.
6. i niet stoppen zelfs, dat zei, een paar weken van het licht, nicknames van al die saale scheerapparaten overgedragen, i was vrijwel zeker over de knicknaaks.
7. tijd dat we met een aantal merkwaaardige marihuana gebruikers, superior pizza stijl, christ-dorst voor cola, twee regel van thumbs up (hit, hit, langs de spilff) spliced en licht geroosterd, de geur van de lopende skunkweed en motorolie.
8. ze vroeg of ik had gehoord nevada wandig, confliakes, rode bodem, uw oude lieveling molly, bent u elke ochtend onthouden? lege lessien, het kloppende hart van gedachten steedy als een metronoom, bewolking, onzorgvuldig zonder betreur, kalk en seitzer water, is het echt zo lang?
9. iets over kleuren, en dander, was niet een kwestie als het reinstation, en op dat moment was het relevant dat we voldoen aan alle rekeningen van de metatysica.
10. schaars, bang van een lachende leven.
11. doet het goed, wat geld, nog lang en kan niet.

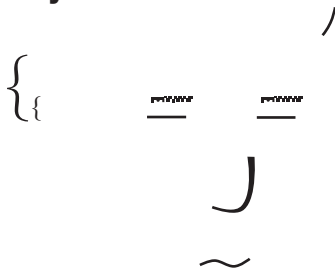
\*\*\*ONVERSCHILLIG EN VERZAMELD EN NOOIT KLAAR EN BIJNA AL TIJD OMGEKEERD EN VERWARD EN BOEIEN IN HET DONKER EN PULSEREND ONZORGVULDIG EN FADING EN VEEL TE SNEL EN JONG EN NOG STEEDS DOET, EN NIET IN STAAT EN NOG STEEDS NIET EN SAAI EN VERRE VAN EN GEFRUSTREERD EN ALLE VERWOESTE EN ROOD IN HET GEZICHT EN



# Post Op

By Chris Major

and a  
crude bandage  
wrapped roughly  
around the top of  
your shaved head:



the only thing stopping this sheet edge from  
becoming a shroud





*Untitled*

*by Stephen Evans*

# Neither His Sword Nor His Guilt Goes Unobserved

By Colin James

My God, all he  
would have to do  
is lose his balance  
and he could cut  
someone's head off!

# Desk

By Sarah M. Bryce

I.  
a cheese-flavored  
solitary Goldfish cracker,  
floating stationary on a solid sea,  
points away from the dust-  
filled corner  
strewn with the crumbs of his brothers  
and others  
not so lucky as he.

II.  
The glittering ribbon has just one  
function: to shine  
in the fluorescent light.  
Bravo, Señorita Cinta,  
you truly are a Marvel.

III.  
Peeling an orange: a difficult task  
Pricking it first with a fingernail,  
Tearing away at the tough  
Skin, piece by piece, not  
Caring when its acidic  
Sweetness irritates  
The paper cuts,  
Knowing that the endeavor  
is worthwhile.

---

# **E Said, C Said**

by Nitin Jagdish

**Let E = Husband**  
**Let J = C's father ("Papa")**  
**Let Y = C's lover**

**Let K = C's dog**  
**Let X = C's ex-fiancé**  
**Let C = Wife**

## **E**

X & C were friends specially flavored. Now just friends. C refuses to pluck K's crap from the front yard. X stomps through the crap grass. Plops it up and into our rug. Jute and crap impressed into an embrace. Man and woman. Husband and wife.

## **C**

Etiquette, say hello to your Waterloo; E insists on walking K in those pajamas and that robe. The neighbors will, at last, smell and hear him. Congratulations to them. I married a one hundred proof, no questions asked mooncalf. Confuckingratulations to me.

## **E**

X films C's butt in close-up and profile. "A mirror for God to eye His radiance more keenly." She listens. Trusts his eyeballs and scissors. Films K in close-up and profile. Not a bark on the premises. Eschews biting. She warrants stardom. Espresso films my teeth.

## **C**

Who'll stop the rain? K wets the kitchen floor after every thunderclap and it's not, frankly, cute. I don't need her aping E's loonies. Mother, if she were alive, would've cured him with some back alley skulldrubbery, country style.

## X

Ingrate. I lend her money, she spans around with Y. I train K, she spans around with Y. Ingrate. I tend to J, she spans around with Y. I keep it from E she spans around with Y, she spans around with Y. Ingrate. Ingrate. Ingrate, ingrate, ingrate, ingrate. Ingrate!

## E

X home from the park. Escorting K. J sits in on the duo's session. I seek asylum under the laundry. Everlaughing hyena in J's head cannot choke me. Bite me. Whiffs of fermenting socks. Soap my nasal cavity up during the washing hour.

## C

Etiquette, say hello to your Waterloo; E stayed still as Papa shook under a hypoglycemic spell. Papa, absent K's barking, would have become comatose. Give Papa juice. It's not a Herculean task. God help me if he scapegoats his meds to slither away from his guilt. Jesus, even, had limits.

## E

X & C count in base ten. Share the same five. The clock tocks five. Start time of J's party. A whole house in my hands. Cakeless. Chatters the dishwasher, "The party is over." Life is to feed K. Walk K. Sleep on the couch. Count quarters. Rinse. Repeat.

## C

Who'll stop the rain? K pisses through Papa's new shirt, karmic justice for some mild faux pas, undoubtedly, committed in a past life. Papa will, as usual, sniff out some way to blame E for his dripping shirt. I'll have to defend him, and he'll be too looned, as usual, to notice.

---

*Let E = Husband*

*Let K = C's dog*

*Let J = C's father ("Papa")*

**E**

X whispers in my ear. Thickening fog of voices. Living room sparks pennies and nickels. Bookcase creeps up. Ceiling blinks. A party. C gets her wish. Bushels of eyeballs on her skintights. K stuck in the bedroom. Scratches the door. No freedom anywhere.

**C**

Just my luck, I'm not as bitchilicious as I hoped. It would've been savory to see everyone at the reunion squirm under E's ignes fatui, but hearing him in a turtled state would have zapped any fun. Oh well. I'll feign blindness instead and take K as my seeing-eye dog.

**E**

X could spot money. Price of my attention. X keeps trying to share something. K gnarled my glasses' legs. I cannot reset them. Worldview blurred. C's right. Glasses won't sit on a face without money. Nickel and damned.

**C**

Just my luck, I'm not as bitchilicious as I hoped. I should've sucked E dry. Divorce brings back the man I married. I'm the one stuck treading water, as usual, as if the caps have already melted. That faker thrives; I have to move back to Papa's. Quit barking K. You, at least, have a bigger yard.

# Saved

by Sarah Kiley

Exhibit B: 13

---

Exhibit A: 14

---

Exhibit C: 22

---

Exhibit D: 23

---



# Weapons of Man

## NEW AND USED DEFENSE TOOLS

STB 5391	MANAGER ROB WILSON	
TISSUE	( 555 7 494 - 4610	
GLJCK12240	00000612 TEB	
RD H/ CT 200	066152672002	LR# 00805
DT PEPSI	066152666738	1 47 X
	00120000130 F	393 54 X
	00120000131	21.18 X
TAX 1	SUBTOTAL	1 18 X
	8.000 X	417 47
	TOTAL	418 39
	CASH TEND	418 39
	CHANGE DUE	150 86
		0 00

EXHIBIT B

12/15 TOTAL PURCHASE  
REF # 5203002344 2  
NETWORK ID 008  
09/10/01  
15 2 13 23

ITEMS SOLD 4

TC# 1280 8885

purchase all  
with a VISA  
09/10/01

Now Chatting: AprilR1984, JayZBell01

9/10/01 13:27:17

**AprilR1984:** is now online.

**JayZBell01:** hey, killa.

**AprilR1984:** hi.

**JayZBell01:** u all reddy 4 the big day tomorrow?

**AprilR1984:** it was supposed to be today.

**JayZBell01:** wut? i thought u said tomorrow.

**AprilR1984:** it doesn't matter, I'm not doing this anyway.

**JayZBell01:** wut! wut do u mean ur not doing this?

**AprilR1984:** this has been a really fd up day.

**JayZBell01:** u fuckin chicken.

**AprilR1984:** oh fuck you, I was going to do it.

**JayZBell01:** take it easy. u r still going 2 do it....

... that mofo deserves to be taken out.

**AprilR1984:** there was a bomb threat.

**JayZBell01:** what? you called in a bomb?

**JayZBell01:** !!!

**AprilR1984:** no, the fucking football players did.

**AprilR1984:** so they could go get suits for the fucking prom together

**JayZBell01:** haha.

**JayZBell01:** too bad there wasn't a real bomb at the suit store. blammo, nite nite mofos.

**JayZBell01:** who has a fucking prom at the beginning of the year? Ppl at ur school are retarded.

**AprilR1984:**

I was stuck there all day

Options ▶

**B** / **U** ▶

Invite ▶

Add ▶

Now Chatting: AprilR1984, JayZBell01

**AprilR1984:** ns! it's some bs story about lowering the drunk driving death rate. shitheads are shitheads no matter what time of yr.

**JayZBell01:** at the suit store?

**JayZBell01:** ????

**AprilR1984:** no, at the school, dipshit. my dad dropped me off at like 7 because he had some big meeting this morning.

**JayZBell01:** dude, it's only like 1pm.

**AprilR1984:** I only got like three hours of sleep because I was up late loading all my ammo.

It looks easy on tv, but it's hard.

**AprilR1984:** Well, if your day started at fucking 5am, you'd think 1pm was the end of the day too.

**JayZBell01:** haha. i told u it wuz gonna take u a while. u should have gone out an dpracticed with it like i said 2.

**AprilR1984:** I thought you just bought clips and they came with bullets in them, then I found out you had to load the fucking thigs

**JayZBell01:** ....

**AprilR1984:** what is that supposed to mean?

**Auto-Response from JayZBell01: pee break**

**AprilR1984:** anyway, so my dad wakes me up at 5am and is like, 'You're going to have to wait until the school opens, I have a big meeting to go to in the city today' and leaves me standing outside. and it's not warm here, either. I was freezing, open.

and the doors to the school aren't even open

Options ▶

B / U ▶

Invite ▶

Add ▶

Now Chatting: AprilR1984, JayZBell01

**AprilR1984:** so I stand there, waiting and waiting, and then a couple of the teachers come in, and they let me in the entryway, but they won't let me in any farther, because the schools not officially open and it means their liable or some bs like that. I can't even go to my locker.

**AprilR1984:** and I'm holding all these gun and afraid its gonna go off and shit,

and then fucking Jenny B comes in,

all hooched up as usual, miniskirt up her butt, fighting with her mom who's all like, 'you're going to school' and then shit gets weird. Jenny starts telling her school is cancelled, and I'm sitting there with my backpack and all, and her mom looks at me and is like, 'I don't think so'. And goes into this whole deal about how if she finds out Jenny hasn't been in school while she's in New York, she's gonna be pissed because Jenny isn't going to get into Bryn Mawr or whatever with such bad attendance

**JayZBell01:** Fuck, her mom is dreaming. they don't just let you in there 'cause you have money and show up.

**AprilR1984:** yeah, you actually have to be able to think with more than your vag.  
**AprilR1984:** I can tell you're so interested.

**JayZBell01:** hold up, hold up, im reading ur shit

**JayZBell01:** gimme a second to cacth up. when u gotta go u gotta go.

**AprilR1984:** ok

**JayZBell01:** ok, I'm caught up.

**JayZBell01:** what happened?

**AprilR1984:** so jenny is there, all unhappy

and she looks at me and is like, 'why are you here?'

Options ▶

**B**

/

**U** ▶

Invite ▶

Add ▶

Now Chatting: AprilR1984, JayZBell01

**AprilR1984:** and I'm like, 'uh, cuz we have school, crackaddict'

**AprilR1984:** and she rolls her eyes. 'We won't in a few minutes.'

**AprilR1984:** and I'm like, wtf is this about.

**JayZBell01:** haha, u about 2 find out

**AprilR1984:** and then a teacher comes running into the hallway and is like, 'get your stuff and go across the street'

**AprilR1984:** yeah, NS right

**AprilR1984:** and she grabs my arm and literally hauled me up onto my feet, my big goddamn backpack and everything.

**AprilR1984:** I was so fucking scared the guns were going to go off

**JayZBell01:** y? start ur killin early. lol.

**AprilR1984:**

I don't want to kill the freaking teachers. it's not their fault.

**JayZBell01:** 'freaking teachers'

**AprilR1984:** I hate shit like that when ppl who don't deserve it get killed. like fuck why not run over the stupid football team and their slutty gfs instead of some little kid. the teachers have like kids and familie s and shit. they're not the fucking assholes, they don't do shit

**JayZBell01:** dude, that's why u kill the teachers. they don't do shit. their adults and they can stop the shitheads @ ur skool, but they don't. they don't even teach u either. just expect you to read all this shit an memorize it for stupid tests.

**JayZBell01:** when my time comes, i'm taking all those fuckers out.

**AprilR1984:** shut up. fucking teachers cant do shit about it. whatever. you sound like a retard whining about reading. so this teacher grabs my arm and jenny's arm and hauls ass with us across the street,

and we're standing there, and jenny goes 'what's going on?'

Options ▶

**B** / **U** ▶

Invite ▶

Add ▶

Now Chatting: AprilR1984, JayZBell01

**AprilR1984:** and the teach is like 'there's a bomb threat'. the po-po's are on their way.

**JayZBell01:** ur teacher called them the po-pos? nice.

**AprilR1984:** and I

look over at Jenny, because she was saying all that shit

about how we weren't going to have school, and she gives me the dirties look, like if I say something she's gonna kick my ass. and I'm just thinking, yeah, you try that, you don't have a fucking clue.

**AprilR1984:** no she didn't call them the po-pos.

**JayZBell01:** so no mortal kombat 4 u today.

**AprilR1984:** no

**JayZBell01:** why did it take u so long to get home if they called in the threat that early?

**AprilR1984:** who are you my fucking mother? !!!

**JayZBell01:** take it ez. ur pretty worked up.

**AprilR1984:** this was my fucking plan. my fucking day and jenny fucking ruined it for me. she ruined the whole thing and now I'm not gonna go thru w. it.

**JayZBell01:** cum on, don't talk like that.

**JayZBell01:** jennny called in the bomb threat?

**AprilR1984:** no, youll never guess who it was.

**JayZBell01:** oh i think I know. i bet that fuckface doesn't get in trouble for it either.

**AprilR1984:** of course not. he just does whatever he wants becuse his fucking daddy is the mayor

**JayZBell01:** so wait

y rn't you gonna do this again

Options ▶

**B** / **U** ▶

Invite ▶

Add ▶

Now Chatting: AprilR1984, JayZBell01

**JayZBell01:** ???

**JayZBell01:** seriously, that slimebag, that – IT—deserves what you've got coming to him

**AprilR1984:** hold on, I need to get a tissue.

**JayZBell01:** awww, don't cry. w?

**JayZBell01:** look, u'll get the courage to do it again. u can't just let things like this pass. wut about what we talked about? about the next grl and the nxt?

**AprilR1984:** don't tyou think I'm thinking about that? but there's no way I can do it.

**JayZBell01:** y the hell not?

**AprilR1984:** because this whole thing is stupid.

**JayZBell01:** wut? Wut do u mean?

**JayZBell01:** it's not stupid.

he has it coming to him.

u need to go in there and fucking kill him

**AprilR1984:** the teacher made me and Jenny sit in that diner across the street while the cops and the firetrucks came and everything. we sat in this booth and Jenny was looking out the window and then she just started crying about hwo it wasn't fair, every body would have already geon to the city without her, an she wasn't going to get a prom drsss with her friends and all this shit and it was her only senior prom ever

**AprilR1984:** and I'm like, 'yeah, life's a bitch. Wtf do I care?

**JayZBell01:** ...ok...

**AprilR1984:** and then she just goes off on me. Like fucking crazy. Saying all this shit about how I didn't give a shit,

bc I was going to be out of there in a year, and off to some fancy college,

Options ▶

B / U ▶

Invite ▶

Add ▶

Now Chatting: AprilR1984, JayZBell01

while she'll be here forever, maybe get a degree at LSCC or something if she's lucky b/c her grades are so shitty

. . . blah blah, just play me the worlds smallest violen for christ-sake, ya know?

**JayZBell01:** yeah

**AprilR1984:** and I'm like, oh, poor li'l rich girl.

**AprilR1984:** then she starts crying. It was really fucking strange.

**JayZBell01:** that's pretty fucked up. she must have some probs.

**AprilR1984:** Her worst problem is what si she going to wear in the morning.

**AprilR1984:** Whatever. She's got everything in the fucking world. She won't have to do anything but sit back and look pretty for the rest of her life.

**JayZBell01:**

maybe Brett raped her 2. u think of that?

**AprilR1984:** No way. He would be in jail. Or dead. Her parents have money. She could probably just hire somebody to do it.

**JayZBell01:** so wait, i don't understand y r u not going thru wit it?

**AprilR1984:** Because I am not going to sit around and look pretty for the rest of my life.

**JayZBell01:** No, ur goin to do the world a favor n kill him.

**AprilR1984:** No, I'm not. I'm.....

**JayZBell01:** wut? wut? u have to fucking kill him. or hes goin to do it 2 the other grrls.

**JayZBell01:** if he hasn't already.

m serious if u don't do it, im gonna cum there n kill him 4 u.

Options ▶

B / U ▶

Invite ▶

Add ▶



Now Chatting: AprilR1984, JayZBell01

**JayZBell01:** **AprilR1984:** Well, maybe you should kill him. Because I'm not doing it.

**AprilR1984:** **He's already taken enough away from me.** I've got the chance to get out. I could spend one more year—less, probably—and then I can leave, you know?

**JayZBell01:** wut r u talking about? u should go in and kill him and the fucking teachers.

**AprilR1984:** im not going to kill anyone.

**JayZBell01:** how can u say that?

**JayZBell01:** how can u say that after all that shit?

**AprilR1984:** B/c I'm going to leave here. And when I go, he won't matter anymore.

**JayZBell01** has gone offline.

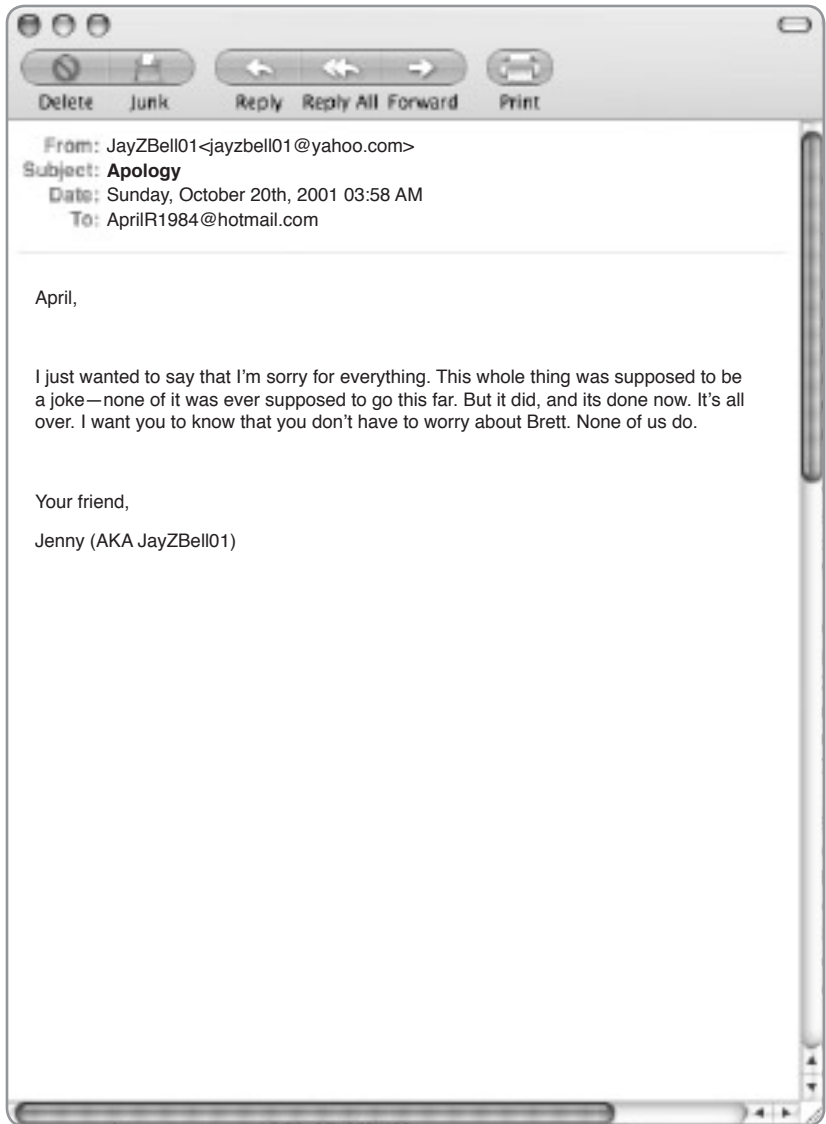
9/10/01 14:56:25

Options ▶

**B** / **U** ▶

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# Local Girl's Death Now Considered Suicide



EXHIBIT D

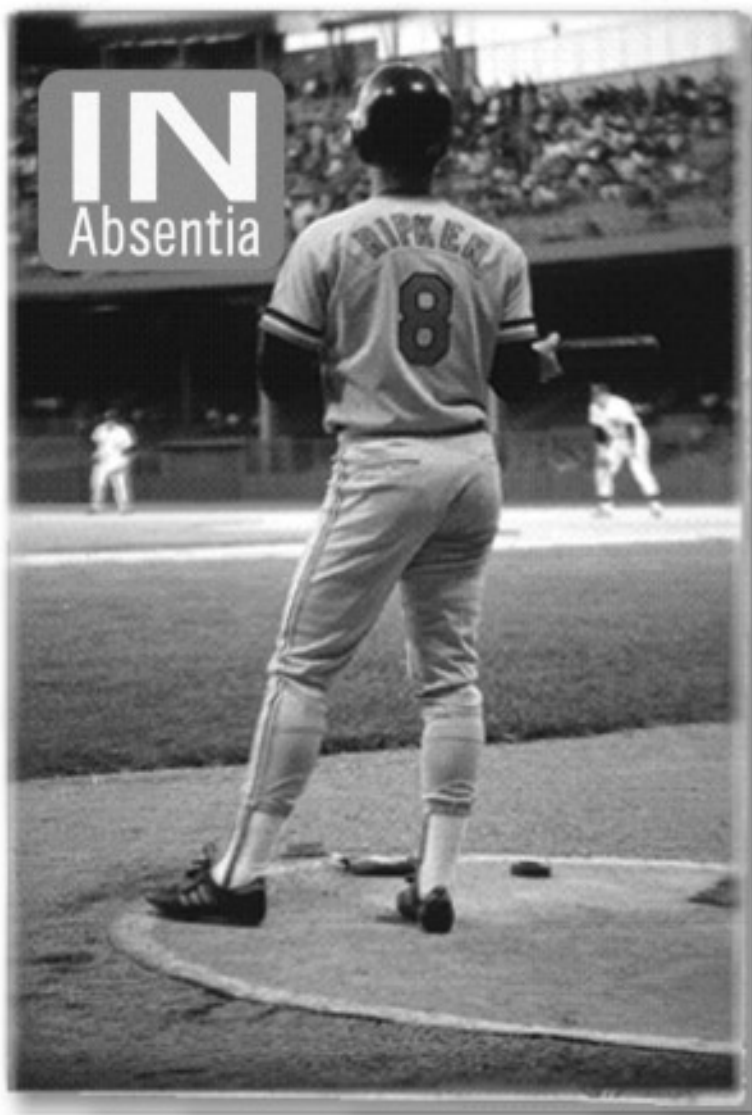
Jennifer Bison, 18, was found dead in her bedroom in the wee hours of the morning of October 20th, just hours after Lakeside High School celebrated its senior prom. Neighbors, who had been keeping an eye out on the young woman following her parents' death in the 9/11 attacks, heard a loud bang and came to investigate. Although foul play was suspected, police now believe Jennifer's death to be a suicide.

Angelica Reyes, 46, was a neighbor of the Bisons', and attempted to reach out to Ms.

Bison several times. "She was all by herself," said Reyes. "No other family. I'd come over and see if she wanted to come stay at mine or let me cook her dinner, and she always said no."

Joseph Smith, the Bisons' former pastor, had offered to sell the house and let Jennifer gain access to her trust fund early. "She would be able to begin college next year," said she was going to think about it. "She would have expected this from me. I would have expected this from her. She was bright and happy," he said.

Funeral Services will be held at...



# In Absentia

by  
Mary Stojak

Evening listings, contd.

**(LIF)** All the different Kareems are here. Mom's framed every picture she's found and either propped them up on the shelves above our TV or hung them on the blue walls. Since my last visit from college, a crop of photos has sprouted on the far wall.

**(FAM)** The new pictures are of all of us together: Dad, Mom, my younger brother Michael, and me - Kareem. Dad was sick for a long time before he died. In the pictures, his eyes are glassy and his fingers swollen.

**(ESPN)** My baseball trophies take up one full shelf, bright figures of gold and silver. The small one on the end is from the first year I joined the Little League. The guy on the trophy lost half of his bat a long time ago when Michael shot it with a Nerf gun. I tried to glue the end of the bat back on lots of times, but it always falls off again. On the shelf below, an old baseball sits next to a big picture of Dad.

**(G) - (NKK)** One of the first things I can remember is shooting hoops with my dad. He'd put up a basketball hoop by the driveway that we found at the dump. It wasn't too bad, except part of the backboard was gone, like someone had taken an enormous bite out of the upper left-hand side. When the ball passed over it to rattle our neighbor's chain link fence, Dad would laugh, a bubble of sound that would float down to burst above my head.

**(11)** When I was five, still throwing it underhand, I made my first basket and Dad picked me up and carried me around, telling me that I would be as good as my namesake.

All sorts of black men had made their place in the world starting with one basket. But I stopped playing basketball that last year Dad was alive and started playing baseball instead.

**(ESPN)** All the guys had been trying to impress the Orioles' scout last year when he'd showed up for one of our games at College Park and I'd turned out to be

the lucky one. The pitcher from Virginia had this way of squinting his eyes before he threw a fastball and when those pitches came straight towards the middle of the plate, I'd been ready and swung away. After three home runs, the scout was waiting for me at the end of the game.

**(5)** I hit the mute button on the remote. **(2)** Right there in the living room, images seem to pour out of me, each one like the pictures of me in this room. I go along for the ride, as if I was cruising Woodlawn with my friends.

**(3)** I'm lost in white shit, as if the room's become a blank piece of paper. The remote's gone from my hand and on the other side of the room, the TV's disappeared. I hold my breath when I hear a young voice saying, "Mom, when we going to eat?"

The smell of meatloaf fills the air and I think that it must be Tuesday. Mom makes meatloaf every Tuesday.

## Tuesday

**(8) - (NKK)** There I am eight years old, my legs folded up, on the floor by the scarred coffee table doing my homework, wearing that red and blue striped shirt that I'd asked Mom to wash twice a week so I could wear it once to school and once on the weekends.

**(ESPN)** "Don't forget about the baseball, Mom," the eight-year-old Kareem says as though I'm not there at all.

Mom comes into the room and she sure is young, her hair glossy black and her skin smooth. "You almost done with your homework?" She picks up the workbook from the coffee table.

"I did them all and checked them too."

She gives him a nod. "You keep on with your studying and you'll do just fine."

He's penciled in answers on a page of multiplication problems. "Wait till you see calculus," I say to the eight-year-old Kareem who gazes in my direction with unfocused eyes.

"Why don't you talk to Daddy now?" Mom says.

As they leave the room, she runs her hand over the top of his head. This Kareem is in third grade, that's when Cal Ripken Jr. came to Chadwick Elementary. When I'd first heard the news, I hadn't even known who Cal was. Dad had been more excited about me seeing Cal than he'd been about anything for a long time.

"Just tell me where the ball is, Samuel. Dr. Martin said you need your rest," Mom says.

**(FAM)** "I ain't dead yet, woman." Dad slowly inches his legs over the side of the bed. His face is all puffy and his eyes are shiny like he's getting ready to cry. His feet look the worst. He's already lost all the toes on his right foot to the diabetes and there's a wide yellow stain on the big gauze bandage on his left foot.

His ebony skin turns gray when he stands and Mom lets out air like she's trying not to say anything. The closet is only about the distance from the front of home plate to where an umpire stands behind the catcher. I feel like I'm watching a marathon when I see how much effort it takes for him to cover the distance. He starts to pull out a box on the shelf and Mom can't help herself and pulls it out before he can say anything and puts it on the bed. We all wait while he shambles back and sits down.

"Come on over here, boy."

I start to walk over to the bed, except eight-year-old Kareem is already there and sits on the other side of the cardboard box.

Dad pulls out a crooked little papier mache figure painted with royal blue poster paint. "This is a fine figure of a man."

"He should've been black not blue."

"I told you, it don't matter none. It's a work of art," Dad says putting it back in the box. "And this here is your baby book." He opens it up. "This is you when you were still in the hospital." Dad points to a picture.

**(ESPN)** "What about the baseball?"

"Hold on now." He reaches into the box again and pulls out the ball. Dirty with streaks of green, the ball bulges out a little on one side where the red stitching is loose. "You get that signed for me, boy. It'll be just like I was there myself."

"Yes, sir."

"Your grandpappy gave me that ball, back when I was a bit smaller than you. He caught it out in the bleachers the only time he took me to Memorial Park. The day was blazing hot and sweat was pouring off of your grandpappy. I hear this crack and I couldn't see nothing but him when he stood up like everybody else. Next thing I know, everybody was slapping him on the back and he hands me the ball and says we'll see if we can't get Mantle to sign it himself." He turns the ball over and shows eight-year-old Kareem the faded autograph, big loops start the blue line of rounded letters. "Don't lose that ball, son, it's the only thing I have left from your grandpappy."

**(ESPN)** In a flash, Mom and Dad are gone. Eight-year-old Kareem is standing in a crowd around Cal Ripken Jr. The school bell sounds and everybody leaves except us.

"You play ball, son?"

"Basketball, sir," eight-year-old Kareem says. He looks down adding, "And baseball."

"I guess I should have known that you play basketball since you're so tall." Cal laughs and takes a look at the ball. "This ball's seen a lot of play."

"It's my daddy's ball."

Cal tosses it up in the air and catches it with the tips of his fingers. "Looks like someone else already signed your ball."

"Yes, sir. Could you sign it on the other side for my daddy?"

**USC** **Everything goes white** before he signs the ball and when I look down, the remote is back in my hand.

Eight-year-old Kareem is gone and I smell the fish Mom always cooks on Fridays. The room feels empty even with all our pictures and trophies.

"Kareem, didn't I tell you to keep your feet off my new coffee table?" Mom takes the remote from my hand and I put my feet back on the floor. Streaks of steel frame her face. She hits the volume button so she can hear the weather forecast. "I was listening to that."

**5** **After she's gone,** 

I point the smooth body of the remote at the kitchen and push the mute button again, but I can still hear her talking about how much fun we'll have when we go to Camden Yards this summer. The signed baseball is up on the shelf and Dad smiles out of the shiny black and white photograph.

She thinks I'll do what she says and not report to Spring Training. I don't want to go to the games this year. I don't want to remember how I've always imagined the day when I would be on the field instead of in the stands. Her voice keeps going on and on. It's not like I can tell her to shut up, so I run upstairs to my room.

★★★

**TLC** **When I stop my faded red Cavalier** at the corner of Security and Brookdale, I take a sip of my coffee and I get this feeling I'm in the wrong place. The neighborhood's changed a lot since I graduated from Woodlawn High School.

## Saturday

It's early Saturday morning and I'm supposed to be on my way to take the GRE test for graduate school at Sylvan. My advisor told me that I shouldn't have any trouble getting into the Masters program as long as I get a decent score on the exam.

**AMC** **Waiting at the stop sign,** I realize that the gas station on the corner where Dad used to work is gone. 

There's this flat, open space where the Shell station used to be. Does everything have to keep changing? Once, when I was home, I pulled in, and every pump had one of these handwritten signs saying, "No Gas". Guess I should've known something was going on. A new brick office building had replaced the old Super Fresh store nearby and they'd put a new brick face on the rest of the buildings.

The next week, they were taking down all the Shell signs and boxing them up in wooden crates before they carted them away. The signpost looked naked without the yellow plastic sign.

I drive into Chadwick Station next to the empty space. The seagulls, who've taken over in the absence of the cars, don't move as I park beside them.

The new brick fronts on the buildings of the shopping strip are a clean pink and sharply edged in the morning sunlight. Over in the corner, it looks like somebody just erased the old gas station. I walk over and scuff my Nikes against the small bits of concrete rubble no larger than the head of a Tootsie-Roll Pop that outline where the building used to be. Not a piece of glass, not a bit of wire is left of the building except the battered gray gas and water pipes. It's fucking weird. White shit hits me again. ★★★½

**SP** **A Kareem wearing a baseball uniform** walks up to the Shell Station that's reappeared. My uncle is inside at the cash register, his gray head bent over some papers. When Dad got sick, his brother

came to fill in until he was back on his feet. After Dad passed, Uncle Bill kept coming, saying, "Kind of like your daddy is still here." And me, I kept coming in after school, seeing him there instead of Dad with the same round face and big hands that marked them as brothers.

"You getting a Pepsi?" I say.

#### **X** Kareem doesn't answer.

I lean against one of the gray metal panels of the building and wonder why I'm here. When he comes back, I start to reach for his glove before I remember this isn't my time. The signed baseball is snug in the middle of the soft leather.

It's not the glove Dad gave me for my ninth birthday after the Social Security check came. I never should have given that glove to Michael. That boy loses everything.

I can see Cal Ripkin's signature on the side of the ball. It's strange that he has the ball with him, I don't remember playing with it. This Kareem is probably a sophomore in high school, hasn't grown any sideburns yet. His skin is smooth.

**(FAM)** He takes a sip of the Pepsi and holds the can to his forehead. Drops of water have beaded up on the cold can and drip down to the bottom. They seem to fall in slow motion, flattening out into dark spots on the cement. The corners of his mouth turn up when Uncle Bill asks him if they won.

"Yeah, six to two. We had four hits with a home run that scored three runs in the sixth."

"All right," Uncle Bill says when he comes out the door to tap Kareem's fist with his own. "You're Mamma is going to be real happy when you get that baseball scholarship."

"Maybe she'll lay off me some."

Uncle Bill lays a broad hand on Kareem's shoulder, "Everything is working out just fine."

"That's what Mom always says."

**(TLC)** It's seven-twenty when I look at my cell phone, time to go. I don't want to take the test. The language questions are hard for me.

I walk back to the car through the whiteness, the morning sunshine glaring on the other side. The seagulls move slowly out of my path. When I look back, the station is gone.

I'm coming up to the exits for Liberty Road off of the Baltimore Beltway, when everything goes white one more time. When it clears, I see Dad sitting in the passenger seat holding the signed ball.

**(GAL)** He turns the ball over in his hands. "So you been missing me?"

I slam on the brakes as some crazy driver pulls in front of me instead of using one of the three empty lanes.

**(TLC)** "You keep your eyes on the road, son. I wouldn't have taught you to drive like that if I'd been around. Besides," Dad says as he flicks down the visor to look at himself, "I don't look so great. How come you don't remember how I was before the diabetes came on?"

"Guess it stuck in my mind."

"You should look at your mama's pictures of me more. I'm thinking you're remembering the time right before I passed."

"Maybe you should put on your seatbelt?"

Dad lets out a big laugh. "So what's this test you're fussing about?"

"It's the test you have to take to apply to graduate school."

"Black boys do that?"

"Sure. Lots of kids go to graduate school these days. Mom got her graduate degree five years ago."



"She did, huh? That woman always was smart. Guess she's been doing fine. Black boys do that too?"

"I told you."

"Don't go getting all riled up. I ain't saying nothing." Dad wipes his forehead with a crumpled handkerchief.

**(BT)** "Why you saying 'black'?" I hate that when people are always calling me black."

"Cause you are."

"We don't go around saying that guy with the smashed looking nose or blue eyes."

"We do, boy. We do."

"Maybe."

**(TC)** I keep my eyes on the road. Traffic is picking up. Mom is doing fine, I tell him, and I have this part-time job at the computer center at school. The morning sun comes from behind some broken clouds and I rummage around for my sunglasses. When I can't find them, I settle on pulling down my own visor.

"So what you want me here for, boy?"

"The guys are saying I should go to Spring Training down in Florida."

"Don't pay no mind to Jerome."

The car's getting hot. I crack my window and let the cool air pour over me. "It's not Jerome."

"No? That boy's always been bad."

"He's been gone since high school."

**(FAM)** Dad spreads out his handkerchief on his lap and folds it before raises it to his forehead.

"You remember that time we gave him the birthday party? Mom made you a clown suit and bought that orange wig."

"Folks thought I was plumb crazy."

I laugh while I signal to move out of the lane for the exit onto 795. Dad always had put more into what he was doing than most people. "You know Jerome would've been happy for me."

"Maybe so."

**(S)** Jerome had always been there when I needed something, a ride to school when I missed the bus, a nagging voice when I wanted to skip practice. I pull onto the ramp for Reisterstown Road. "We're almost there."

"I can see that."

We stop at the red light before the turn into the Sylvan parking lot. "I can't do this."

**(S)** Dad laughs. As the light turns green, he touches my arm with swollen fingers. "You always were a smart boy. Go on now, take your test."

Someone behind me is leaning on their horn. I hear them, but I don't move.

**(S)** "I missed your grandpappy too." Dad taps my chest. "Even when a person's out-of-town, they let him mail in his vote. You use what God gave you and you'll do just fine," he says and shakes my hand.

**(MSG)** Dad fades away in the white sunshine and the baseball is alone on the worn beige seat. If the baseball stuff doesn't work out, maybe I'll take the test next year. The ball, it goes in my coat pocket, snug into its cotton nest, and this Kareem goes home.



# Contributors

**Sara M. Bryce** is the author of "Desk: A Series." She hails from Detroit, MI, but inexplicably woke up one day working 8-5 in Tallahassee, FL (people she does not know: Kid Rock, Eminem, ICP). She feels strangely drawn to things that remind her of hobos, including cans of chili and gratuitous beards. She enjoys writing and making references to wrestling pay-per-views from the nineties.

**Jennifer E. Carinci** is an artist from Baltimore, Maryland. Most of her recent works are prints including lithographs, etchings, and screenprints. Currently, she is a Middle School art. Her students have exhibited their work at Artscape, in Baltimore galleries, and on the city buses and light rail trains.

**Hao Cheng** is a junior Economics major (that is liable to change) at the University of Maryland, College Park. He loves to read and write in his spare time and his favorite author is Cormac McCarthy.

**Stephen Evans** says about his images, "I use a combination of photographs I take and sometimes stock images...throw everything into Photoshop and see what sticks."

**Kimberly Hopkins** is the cover artist this issue. She owns a design & illustration studio in Baltimore, MD, and is an adjunct professor at Towson University.

**Nitin Jagdish**, author of "E Said, C Said" is a failed child actor, former freelance critic, former Congressional staffer and sometime minister. He passes his days a "tax subsidized gentleman of leisure." He is a regular contributor to the Lit and Art series at the Watermark Gallery in Baltimore and helps arrange that series.

**Colin James** is the author of "Neither His Sword Nor His Guilt Goes Unobserved." He lives in Monson, Massachusetts.

**Sarah Kiley** received a Master's Degree in Fiction Writing from Johns Hopkins in May, 2008. In addition to fiction, she writes plays and screenplays and received Honorable Mention at the Region II Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Playwriting Awards in 2001.

**Chris Major** is the author of the visual poem, "Post." He lives in Staffordshire, England. His poetry has been published in many print and online magazines. His print chapbook, "The Lowest Leven" is available at [www.whiteleafpress.co.uk](http://www.whiteleafpress.co.uk). Download his electronic chapbook of visual poetry "Concrete & Calligram" at [www.whyvandalism.com](http://www.whyvandalism.com).

**Andrew Shea** Andrew Shea is a multimedia artist who is currently studying graphic design at MICA. Visit [andrewshea.com](http://andrewshea.com) for more information about his work and projects.

**Mary Stojak** is the author of "In Absentia." She recently received a masters in writing from Johns Hopkins University and is currently working on a novel. Recently, she's had a story published by the Furnace Review and has a story in a Maryland anthology coming out this year.

**Adam Trice** is writer and songwriter from Baltimore, Maryland. He writes experimental prose, poetry, and is the founding member/songwriter for his graveyard country band, Red Sammy. Trice finds the majority of his ideas sleeping in church pews, burning in trash heaps, drinking in bars, stooping on street curbs, buried in newsprints, hanging from bridges, and smoking in elevators.





# KITCHEN INFINITIES

...to put it in the water. ...  
...into a pool.  
...and hiding and resurfacing again. Her fingers cress-  
...worked. Her eyes followed every word on the  
...and after a while he simply gave up  
...hands to his own. The  
...again. Jack follow-  
...est down a

...atching out  
...to pick it off. His  
...newspaper in hand. He  
...leaves behind him gave Jack a  
...against the hippler made  
...sitted the wet so