

Air in the Paragraph Line

A Newsletter about Jon Konrath's writing and life.

Issue 2- April 1996

Here's the gig:

Hello again and welcome to the show that never ends. It's been a busy month in the rainy city I like to call Seattle, but I'm still here. If you're new to AITPL, let me start with a ten-second explanation. You're holding a brief update of the last month of my life. Some people read it because they're my friends and like to know I haven't jumped off an 8 story building yet, while others are wondering what's up with my writing projects. And yet others just like the fucked-out collage of prose contained within. So put down that chainsaw, take a quick glance at these pages, and see what you think.

First a big thanks to everyone who read and responded to Issue 1. I didn't think such a dumb idea would get such a positive response, but it seems like some of you dig what's up. A few of you reported your overwhelming urge to shoot yourselves after reading the issue, and a few more called in worry that I might've had a gun to my head ready to pull a Cobain over my current situation. Chill out, everything's fine and although I am overworked and underslept, I'm far from my last thread. The writing gets bleak in places, but that's my deal. You'll notice I didn't put in any of my journal writing this month. March's journals were about 30 days of the same old shit, and I didn't want to sound redundant. I have taken up its place with some book reviews, and a brief clip from my current book, Rumored to Exist.

About the writing, things have been busier than hell lately. Aside from my appearance in **Metal Curse** #9 (\$3 payable to Ray Miller at POB 302, Elkhart, IN 46515-0302), I will have a regular column called Ipecac in a Shotglass in **Extent**, a punk zine out of Boston. My first appearance will be in issue #7, which should be out by April and is \$4 which includes a CD sampler (contact John LaCroix, 38 Calumet Street #3, Boston, MA 02120, email extent@tiac.net). I also wrote a short piece called "Testing Day" which will appear in **Making the Lines**, a human rights anthology published by University of Guelph in Ontario. More info on that as it becomes available. Also, it looks like an excerpt from Rumored to Exist will appear in **Imagined Corners**, an upcoming nationwide literary journal. No details

on that yet, things are still getting started.

I was also recently given an offer to speak at Western Washington U in conjunction with their Science Fiction and Fantasy Club. This is in a planning phase, but if things go well, I'll be giving a workshop and maybe speaking on a writers' panel. These events will also be open to outside people, so if you're in Seattle and want to heckle me, I'll be glad to give you the dates when I know them.

As for the writing... I've made the decision to put my first book, Summer Rain, in storage for an indefinite period. The book's done, but was in a perpetual editing phase. Although I learned a lot from the writing and I love the story dearly, I don't think it's going to get sold and my energy is best applied elsewhere currently. Maybe when I've got three books sold and I want to milk the fans for more cash without writing another epic, I can send it to a book doctor and get it printed as a historical early work (i.e. it will be the 'live album' used to pad a 3-book deal or something). When I get some time later this spring, I will try to clean up the manuscript and maybe photocopy a few for those of you who were interested in seeing the final project. More on that when I have the time and money.

Rumored to Exist is completely kicking ass. Three excerpt deals are out, lots of people have given me very positive feedback, and the writing continues with an incredible amount of synergy. The complete first draft will be finished by mid-April, and even with heavy edits, there should be a decent manuscript done before Memorial Day. I haven't been releasing interim builds lately, but I will probably let a few people take a peek at the final draft before I start spamming it to agents.

And yes, I have started thinking about book 3. It will probably start to go down in July. No spoilers yet, but I'm hoping for something with all of the Rumored insanity and randomness, but longer and with more of a running story and 'thicker' concept.

In other news, I managed to get in and out of a relationship with a woman in about three days flat. No details if you haven't heard them, but those of you who were of the "I think Jon needs to get some to calm down" philosophy, you just lost your bets.

Okay, let's get rolling here...

Scraping the Bucket

A Taste of March's outgoing mail

I've been listening to Trout Mask Replica by Captain Beefheart all day today. It's a CD guaranteed to keep everyone out of your office. Also great for clearing out parties relatives and hangers-on.

I am 3 hours behind. which is fitting because i have always been behind in my life anyway so at least i am in a whole strip of the planet which is 3 hours behind you.

I'm getting sleepy here, so I should probably just crash. I hope for long and bizarre dreams of Indiana summers and living in basements and taking apart cars and finding secret groves of apple trees in the middle of the swamps of Florida. Or at least something better than a wisdom tooth crying for mercy to my nervous system....

one time when i was outside the union, this german shepherd dog came up to me and was being all nice and his owner was out trying to get a piece of ass or throwing a frizbee or something. and this dumb kid came up to me and goes "hey man is that your dog?" and I said "Rommel! Kill!". the kid sure freaked.

sorry about the classes and flunking and stuff but flunking is cool. i had 2 semesters where i was below a 0.5 GPA. once i was a .2 or something and the other i was a straight 0. i did manage to drop a class on the last day of classes though by getting a note from my shrink.

i am sleepy. gotta go to bed now although i am reading a book on nuclear bombs and hydrogen bombs. i bet i have bad dreams.

No. no. no. no. no. no. no. no. I went to IU and never went to a basketball game, never saw the little 500 bike race as featured in that film "Breaking Away" and never went to a frat party. I did manage to catch a few of the operas though.

I went to some sort of day-camp thing one summer, a kiddie

activity type thing. I think I was about 6, I eventually convinced my mother that it wasn't worth her time to drive me there each day and I finished out my summer with the legos and the TV.

>14. Do you like control?

I like the alt key better than control.

The story of sleeping in Jeff's room reminds me of when I was dating my last gf and living in that awful boarding house on Mitchell St. I was semi-nocturnal, working until 2 and then working on the magazine until 5 or 6 in the morning, but she had 8:00 or 9:00 classes most days. When I was asleep, she'd come over after her class and slip in without waking me. And instead of waking up cold and grumpy, I'd suddenly have this warm, beautiful, nice-smelling person in my little single bed with me.

And I still don't have a TV. But I'm not sure I want one now, the whole idea of sitting down and watching one for 2 or 3 hours a day seems so foreign. I mean, I could just sleep an extra 2 or 3 hours and I wouldn't have to spend \$300 on a set to do it....

I fell asleep after dinner with Alanis Morissette in the changer. Her whining about the guy that dumped her (I shouldn't knock it - I wrote a 550 page book about someone who dumped me) kept me half-awake and in a state of perpetual REM. To me, REM sleep is better than sex: I have it far more often, and it doesn't involve me getting in a disastrous relationship which summates with somebody throwing everything I own out of a third story window because I forgot "sweetest day" or some other hallmark holiday.

So, I had a long and detailed dream that everyone where I worked got moved to a large apartment building. Everyone had a 2 or 3 bedroom flat, with cheesy 70's furniture, horrid earth-tone carpeting and wallpaper, and enough small damage to convince me that the place was a steal. So we all lived there, no more rent, 24 hours of salary and work. And each living room had a staircase up, with a set of habitrail-like clear tubes which we all used to scamper to the other offices.

I remember the confusion because the trails weren't incredible easy to master. For example, there were only 3 or 4 'hubs' per floor, and you had to move from hub to hub if your x/y movement changed. But because I was on the top floor, my tubes actually went outside. I remember a day when it was raining outside (Seattle, you know) and I had this incredible distorted view of Bellevue and gray skies through this mask of droplets and spray on the tubes. And it was impossible to make it feel like you weren't living in a rented trailer in the worst part of Kent. My room had some prayer knitted on the thickly textured wall, a psalm in crocheted olive threads, with a heavy wheat background. I covered it with a large, nude poster of Jenny McCarthy, which was somehow signed to me but I sure don't remember that part of the dream. Anyway, it reminded me of my old boardinghouse days. I lived in a place with 12 people, an old house originally built in the 1930's but cobbled together and expanded to 2 or 3 times its size over the years. The only enhancements to the rooms were gory paneling from the 60's, some rotting and off-white suspended ceiling tiles from the 70's, and a bunch of recycled brown carpet, covered with beer stains. I spent 2 years trying to juggle, hide and camouflage the room's contents to make the perfect babe lair. It never worked.

I woke up really thinking I had the Presidents of the United States album, and once I regained movement, I realized I didn't.

>10) If you could create a national holiday, what would it be and how would people celebrate it?

Jon Day - January 20 - Two Drink Minimum - Women Drink Free

two hours late for work - many things to do but i dont feel like doing anything but keeping the door closed and listening to CDs. im glad im a salaried employee so i can just stay late and balance this out.

I guess I forgot to tell you I was an axe murderer. Don't hold it against me though.

Once while bored and waiting 87 hours to get into a Cannibal Corpse show in the middle of Ohio, my friend Ray and I took out all of our change and "converted" every newspaper machine on a city block into Rock Out Censorship zine machines by opening the machines and then stocking them with our own zines in the little glass windows. I don't know if anyone ever bought them, but they sure as hell looked cool.

i used to claim that the only time i wrote poetry was when i was trying to get in someone's pants. now i claim that i only write poetry when im trying to get in someone's pants, or when im incredibly depressed.

from dusk till dawn also a must-see, if anything for Cheech's small role and to hear harvey keitel say "its not suicide if you're already dead" in his texas preacher voice.

My stomach's killing me. Trying to get through all of the Brandenburg Concertos before bedtime. I did no writing, no reading, but now have a definite opinion (negative) on this Marky Mark character.

Glad you got/liked the thing in the mail. Sorry it sounded so depressing, you caught me in a bad decade.

And I am once again reminded that smell is my most acute sense today. I was using some fantastik to clean my filthy new desk, and the cleaner reminded me of a summer four years ago when I used the same brand of cleaner to scrub down the leftovers from a late night of drinking down rum and puking it back up again. I used so much of the damn stuff, my room smelled Fantastik-like for a month later.

The leather jacket isn't a secret clue that I'm into bondage or the village people or sex with cows or any other secret thing it's supposed to mean. Basically, I have a black leather jacket because it is universal in both color and style. Black matches anything. And I could wear a black leather jacket at a biker

bar or a Pearl Jam show or a literary book reading or an Iron Maiden show and it would blend in at any. I don't really fit into any given style or trend or group or fashion, so the jacket was a logical choice.

Speaking of dismemberment, they are giving away White Zombie tickets on the radio. I wonder how the weapons check at the door is. If I won the backstage passes, I'd go. Imagine the possibilities re: shitting in their drinks, getting the chick in the band to vomit, getting a hundred chicks at the show to vomit, vomit vomit vomit. You need to write a song about vomit, and not a 4 hour instrumental with Jesus samples.

Fuck. I took a nap by accident now I'm going to be up forever and I won't get shit done. I wish I had a dartboard so I could practice throwing knives.

things are random here, i keep falling asleep after work and blowing my early evening in no-REM sleep, then waking up all grumpy, eating dinner at 10, and not working until 3 in the morning, which makes me oversleep about 3 hours. I tried to break the habit today, but didn't work.

I had a dream about Liggett when I fell asleep after work. We lived in some giant ranch house, it looked like a 60's architecture with the big foyer and giant living room with the wood trim everywhere and inset bookshelves, like a house you'd see on the Brady bunch or my three sons or leave it to beaver or something. But the bookshelves and floors and tables and walls just overflowed with used books in various stages of decay, magazines in piles and thousands of pounds of vinyl, like a Book Cellar type store gone in total disarray. All I remember was Liggett glued to the TV, and it must've been fairly early in the lease, because I remembered I had a giant Kurtzweil electric piano/organ that Matt hadn't seen, and I was really wanting to drag that thing into the kitchen and crank it up and start playing Louie, Louie or Whip It or Satisfaction or something. Then I woke up and was completely bummed that I didn't have this ancient instrument, or any instrument to screw around with.

2:30-something and no sleep in sight. Warm milk, masturbation, masturbation with warm milk, it just isn't working. It's time to drag out the old econ books and start reading about the GNP. Either that or Chaucer.

And 4 years isn't forever ago, but my memories are so skewed - it seems like a billion years ago, because it was a billion miles away and I was in a much different season of my life. But certain thoughts remain pristine, like they just happened 15 minutes ago. The human mind is a terrible thing to baste.

I cut my late-ness down to an hour 40 today. I don't think I fell asleep until 4 or 4:30 though, so I'm still incredibly tired.

Cool to hear of the trip south. Going to Disney-world? I have a friend that's working there right now. I haven't heard from him, so I don't know what he's doing, but I imagine he's probably cleaning hurl off the space mountain cars or something.

okay, ill calm down. maybe i should go back and read the marky mark interview again to get my mind off of things.

i did date a woman for about a month who managed, aside from me, to date about 2 different men per day. I don't mean two other men aside from me, I mean about 40-50 men a month aside from me. it bothered me a lot, i felt like i needed a major production to grasp her attention for more than 30 seconds. one time i spent all day cooking her dinner - it was a magical evening which summarised with her leaving at about 9 to go meet up with someone else. I finally gave up on her to sink into a three-month binge of unix programming in 40-hour shifts broken with 40-hour intervals of sleep. Over a Christmas break, I managed to avoid speaking to any other human beings for a ten day period, including Christmas and New Years. Then my friend Cayte broke into my house and dragged me to a Long John Silver's in the mall for a long lecture about the evils of hermitism.

about the monogomy thing. i built a dresser out of monogomy in wood class. no wait, that was mahog-

ony.

i go to burger king too by the way. the one by my office is not that good though always very busy and the food isnt as good as others ive been to. the best one was in goshen, in i used to go there all the time in high school back in 1947 when i was in high school.

hey what happened to ya? alien abduction? do you have any crop circles in your yard? jus curious

i wish i could see a nuclear bomb light off, just so i could use it as a pick-up line at parties. "Hey, I'm not a Marine or anything cool like that, but I saw a 20 Megaton h-bomb test that completely vaporized an island in the pacific." Okay, maybe it wouldn't get chicks, but it might be awe-inspiring enough to fuel a short story or two.

I'm thinking I should write an entire book of just long monologues about the 10 or 20 most incredibly memorable moments of my life, the ones that break through and just hang in the front of my head every time i open a Budweiser or walk through the clear and open night air of Bloomington in the summer or smell diesel fuel when i pull up behind an old mercedes or rabbit... I guess I wanted to do that with Rumored, but it exploded into a much more varied bit with all of the silliness and seriousness and everything else.

hey jenniferator, sorry that your heart was ripped from your 'cage and devoured by rabid weasels etc etc. i am familiar with the whole wallowing in depression never leaving room listening to the first 6 black sabbath albums at the same time writing Smiths and Joy Division lyrics all over my body in black pen and so forth. When I'm depressed like that, I find the best thing to do is break stuff. Go find some furniture that someone has set on the curb for the garbagepeoples and take it home and just bash the shit out of it with a brick. it works for me anyway.

i am in a hyper-depressive mood today. i killed my coke page, because of a

lack of time and devotion. it felt like walking away from a two year relationship. very depressing... then i went for a walk over lunch and the combination of almost-rainy weather and cool 60 degree air reminded me of a spring about 3 years ago, and all of the problems and memories of that era just rushed into my head. ive been having a lot of problems lately with similar deva-vu-ish feelings and situations, makes me think im going nutsy.

how did your sister get sick did she eat some kangaroo meat in austria? or some vegemite sandwiches?

hey meg x. havent heard from you in a while. im assuming either you are busy with that school stuff or some KGB agents captured you and you are in this forced labor camp developing a secret weapon to destroy the world made largely of some sort of rock they only study at the university of michigan. this is probably flawed thinking - i am sure the government evenly distributes research grants for this type of rock so large groups of scientists aren't at any given university, just so this sort of thing won't happen. i want to sleep on the weekends, not answer dumb questions about how much rain we get in seattle. YES MOTHERFUCKER, IT RAINS IN SEATTLE! BUT AT LEAST THE PEOPLE ARENT RETARDS!

weather - 50s/60s with rain and a weird rainy haze when it is nice out. the rain isnt heavy though it is very light mist stuff and at night the sky is black and little wisps of silver cotton float across southern seattle from my deck. pretty neat.

i am having heavy instances of deja vu-ish phenomena, when the air and the surroundings and something in my head make me think i am in a different place and time. i was in capital hill going to the subway and i parked at this key bank and when i got out of the car, it felt EXACTLY like i was on kirkwood, just outside the monroe bank, in

1992 when i was in bton for the summer and it always rained. it really freaked me out, because all of the feelings and emotions and problems and people of july, 1992 just hit my brain for about 15 seconds and then vanished again. and then i really missed it... :(

this extreme-right fundie guy i work with thinks that UPC codes are of hell and the devil and that they all contain the number 666. i know how a bar code works and they don't contain 666, but they do have a set of tracking bars in the middle between the sets of two 5-digit numbers which lack the proper spacing to be 6's.

those computer labs have signs that say no pets but i wonder if they mean no petting. i never tried that before.

He woke up from the hangover, with a throat that felt like the green fuzz growing on the hamburger helper in his fridge that he made in 1989.

i need to go finish my toaster strudel and then get writing. sorry about the paranoid delusions you've been having lately. i'd suggest you don't read the book 1984 in the near future.

I never knew e.e. cummings legally changed his name to lowercase. That rules. Technically, I think my last name is KONRATH. That is how it is on the birth certificate. I could put "KONRATH is my last name!" in my sig file.

What British Answering Machines Must Sound Like:

Hello, Bluke, I'm bloody busy eating me boiled cabbage and hard biscuits. And what bloody bee's-wax is it of your, if I do say so. Leave a long-winded bloody boring message in which you get classically British embarrassed. God save the Queen, the bloody bitch. BEEP.

hey man, don't call me flannel boy just because i moved up here! i dont own any flannel, and i havent started drinking coffee, either!

i, however, was required to buy all of the Nirvana albums when i got my driver's license.

my romance life is in the shitter just like yours. all orange juice and no vodka a screwdriver it does not make.

so anyway. which one do you think would win in a fight, chaucer or spenser? shakespeare or browning? hemmingway or faulkner? tolkien or asimov? just checking.

plus the damn srysoft people took our duplex printer and our good photocopier. one of the only reasons i have a day job is for free printing. bastards.

zine on way in mail. me no like complete sentences today. me ride giant wave of caffiene all day. wave crash. me feel like first black sabbath album on 16 speed. me go collapse now. you reply when receive zine.

ps. me check out web page. you fuck skull of jesus. me nail xians to large inverted cross and send lives to hill far away.

i am listening to jawbreaker and wishing i had a barcalounger in my office so i could take a nap. and i am watching the sky get more dismal and grey out the windows. icky. but i can see all of the freakies outside bringing their kids to the matinee movies at the theatre across the street. unfortunately, my windows dont open so i cant yell or throw things. it would be cool though, esp since i am on the 5th floor, and about anything you drop from 5 floors is cool.

hey man are you still lookin for a job? my friend Eddie's lookin for someone to help at his pizza place. you don't actually work at the pizza place, that's just where they launder the money. can you shoot a gun with your casts on?

a hint - if you are going on a date with someone who you think is a little too grabby, keep a copy of Spenser in your pants. No man can get through the Faerie Queene.

What is the simplest thing I can make with flour? I

inherited 5 pounds of it, and my culinary abilities only extend to the tv dinner level. I was thinking of mixing it with water and then frying it in a bunch of lard. Would that work?

I am always getting in trouble because I often use girl as a simplified form for female (i.e. "I work with this girl who blah blah"). I always try to catch myself and say woman or person or whatever, but I have decided that if someone gives me crap about it again, that I will say that I really meant "grrrl" instead of "girl" and it was some sort of statement of solidarity instead of insult.

i was gonna steal your idea and hang a bell from my window but the closest thing i had to a bell was this broken tv and i didnt have 5 stories long of string so i just threw the tv out of the window and that didnt really work. so thanks for the idea anyway.

liked the poem. reminded me of my FAVORITE bukowski poem, which is about him contemplating this half-constructed house nearby while he sits in his attic and, well, contemplates. it really struck me tho...

you know what there is this DJ on 107.7 who has an english accent and his name is Norman B, and it always reminds me of you because your name is Dani B. maybe if mark got married to you and took your name and kept his accent he could get a job at 107.7 as Mark B.

p.s. if you really are going to blow up the school, let me know and ill take a couple days off and go help you. it would be a good stress reliever.

so i got in and out of a relationship in about 3 days. did i beat any records? id like to see it at the olympics, an event where you have to get in and out of a relationship while they time you with a stopwatch. "In a quick manuver, Konrath is playing all of his old Iron Maiden albums on the first date. This looks like a new world record!"

congrats on getting accepted to IU and stuff! you should still visit me though. you can bring your new boyfriend if you want but dont bring your sister and try to trick me.

i have decided that after the book is done i am going to

buy a cheap van and go on a 100 day, 100 city tour of the us, reading poetry and starving and all of that jazz. maybe ive been listening to this henry rollins stuff a bit too much...

hey meg x, do you still have like 5 feet of snow there? do you use a flamethrower to get to classes? do you go to classes or is this one of those relaxed grad school i live in the lab and show up when i want to kind of things?

the depression level's been really low lately, which is surprising considering the events which went down. i guess keeping busy with work and writing does wonders. i should also be depressed because im broke, but since im always in front of a computer or asleep, money isn't much of an issue.

plus those malted milk eggs are in the stores and i love those damn things. easter is a good holiday because 1) those malted milk eggs 2) they nailed Jesus to a cross and killed him 3) it's on a sunday and i always have sunday off and always sleep until 2 in the afternoon.

Pay off that Amex bill. They put a chip in my arm on the first month, and warned me that on the second month, they'd send people out for the soldering-iron-up-the-urethra treatment.

One advantage to the west coast (among thousands): the day it snowed 16 inches out there, I didn't have to wear a coat to work.... In fact, it didn't snow at all in Seattle this year.

god, alanis morissette is a whiner. i mean, ive been dumped before, but ive never based a musical career on it. this is what happens when you don't return those little cards to the BMG CD club. sigh..

still no luck on the comet but i dont know where to look and i cant see it from here and im too tired/busy to drive up to everett or out to issaquah or something to go see it. ive got some comet sink cleaner, thats close enough for me.

if i date anyone they have to at least be somewhat cool and not listen to the 70's channel and think it is cool. who the fuck cares about steely dan and fleetwood mac and the eagles. sheesh. i told her where the name steely dan came from she was not amused. it was the name of a dildo in a wille s. burroughs book, either naked lunch or nova express i forget all those books kinda blend together.

i went to barnes and nobles and there is a girl that i like who works at the register. so whats a good strategy for me to get name rank and serial number. i am spending 20 million dollars a month buying books hoping i get in her line so i can talk to her. she knew who charles bukowski was. and tim obrien. she is doing better than the last girl. i know she is book seller #093 i looked at the receipt. oh well she is probably married has a bouyfriend is a lesbian or doesnt like people who were born in north dakota i dont know.

the 70s sucked suzanne. the only thing memorable from the 70s was the sex pistols and maybe the star wars films. the rest of it was crap. why would this woman think the 70s were so great. at least the 80s had billy idol and VCRs and CD players and computers. the 70s was all disco and that CHiPs show. bleah bleah.

i dont want a date for my moms wedding because then she will assume that i am marrying the woman in the next 15 seconds even if it is a dyke lesbian or a 4 year old. i am thinking of getting one of my gay male friends to go with me so she will shut the fuck up about the whole marriage thing for awhile. of course i think she is under the opinion that homosexuality is a disease and can be cured if they bring you to some clinic, drug you up, beat the shit out of you and then give you a bible. so maybe i better just go alone.

Rumors of Rumored

An excerpt from my book Rumored to Exist

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Dark. Keep the room dark to hide your fears. Drink caffeine straight from the can, spit out the water and sugar and inhale the fear, the shakiness, the muscular atrophy. Laugh at the good, the life the daytime trying to rescue you from what you've become and breathe in the pain of what's trying to destroy you. Stare at the candle burning on your desk of shit. The candle's your life. Tell yourself that when the candle is gone, you are gone. See the wax drip onto the vinyl desktop, over the cheap brass holder. The wax is your life, your soul stripped from your bones by the persistent heat of something drilling straight through your life. Then say, "yeah, motherfucker. I know there are no secrets to life."

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"The stamp says love. What the fuck does the post office know about love? When is it the government's business to know about love? How much love does 32 cents buy? They talk about love, but they go around killing each other with machine guns. I hate the fucking post office almost as much as I hate those prick cocksuckers at skyenet.net." Eddie continued to vent into the phone as I rubbed crayons onto the hotel stationary, creating a mural of the seven dwarves melting in a Dali-like fashion. "Hey, why doesn't the post office invest in time transport equipment?" I asked. "Because they would send your motherfucking mail back in time, so your stuff would take longer to get there," he said. "No, no, they could beam it forward. So it would take them a week, but it would only seem like a day. And they could charge more, like a 'yesterday, guaranteed' thing." "They'd even find a way to fuck that up." And he's right.

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You're dead. You wake up in the morning and you don't feel your body. The sheets pull from your skin, the cold air embracing your flesh, but it is peripheral to you, because you are the dead. You go to your job, you hate your job, you get there late, stare at an assembly line or maybe answer the phone all day. The people's voices are distant, they can only pull automatic responses and cue cards from beyond what is you, because you are the dead. It continues. No joy, no experience, no pulse, no rise, no crest. It isn't just a treadmill, it is the float of the dead man. You cannot exist in the world you only see and cannot touch. You retreat at the end of the day, to throw the soil of the grave on top of your coffin. Nobody watches, nobody hears as you retreat, only to do it again in a few hours. Feel the cold, the lack of all that is alive. Dead.

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I'd like to see some fucked up rap guy become the Pope. He'd come out with that big, fucked up Pope hat on his head sideways, and a pair of jeans about 10 sizes too big, riding his hips with his underwear showing. About three dozen giant gold crucifixes would be on these chains on his neck. His homies would all be cardinals, they'd come out with fourties and bust some psalms, old school.

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It was a woman's bed, I could tell when I woke up because of the matching covers, sheets, comforter, pillows and other miscellaneous linens no guy would own. Plus it smelled like a woman's bed. Once I grabbed my glasses, I focused on pictures, teddy bears, sorority knick-knacks, and other strange mementos in my unfamiliar surroundings. Oh wait, we were at Lars's girlfriend's; I was actually somewhere in Tennessee, although I didn't know where. We drove a 700 mile loop through the southern United States the night before, and he navigated us here for free food, room, board and tourism. Membership has its privileges. "Hey psycho, you awake? There's pancakes, then we're gonna go hit up a bank!" His voice yelled from the downstairs of the split level apartment. I grabbed a shirt and looked down. His girlfriend, some other woman I hadn't met yet, probably a roommate, and Lars sat on the couch, watching cartoons. "They're called hotcakes," his girlfriend said in a southern accent. "Hotcakes, pancakes, coldcakes, fuckcakes, whatever. Psycho will eat them. Once I saw him eat a box of lard when we were in a POW camp in Vietnam." "That was Cambodia, and it was butter," I said, grabbing a plate. "Let's get the show on the road, before I figure out where I am."

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Every time I left her dorm, I felt like there was no reason to be

with her. We fought, argued, said nothing, did nothing, had sex, and then left. I'd walk 20 minutes there, and walk 20 minutes back, leaving so late that I couldn't do any homework, have any friends, try to fuck someone on the side. Nothing. The tally sheet added up to a big piece of shit. So I'd walk in the darkness, sometimes with stars, sometimes with black, sometimes with heat and sweat, sometimes seeing my breath, shuddering and trying to get to my hole in the wall which had slightly more heat. I thought about the summer before, when we had so much spark, spontaneity, it seemed like we could talk forever about nothing. Now we just talked about nothing. And the possibility of leaving, splitting, seemed remote. Stuck in a rut. Fucking and fighting. Fighting and fucking. I sighed. Someday, it would end, like a bad case of cancer. Can't last forever.

58

"Come in!" yelled his voice from behind the partially opened grey metal door. The thick, fireproof steel safety portal muffled his voice, a loud bellow numbed by underwater insulation. I walked into the small college-ghetto apartment. The surroundings looked eerie since his brother moved out: the furniture was arranged in a postmodern configuration that could serve no practical purpose. Two of the couches formed a V facing away from the TV and opening to an armchair. The funnel-like layout wasted the functionality of two couches, but highlighted the empty room in a remarkable, eccentric way. The dim light of a color TV tuned to the cable info channel's endless computer scrolling of pay per view times was augmented by the glow of another three black and white sets turned to static. The last time I asked about this, he said it kept the CIA from reading his mind. "Lemonade?" Lars asked, holding a plastic Crisco container of yellow Kool-aid.

59

An endless tape loop. Periodic dream interruptions - bursts of low-band UHF transmission hitting during REM sleep. A crackled radio voice tells me "This is not a dream - this is a transmission from the future - await further instruction. This is not a dream - this is..." In the foreground, the signal sends a black and white, crackling image of Project Crossroads, where the military detonated a nuke out in the ocean, surrounded by a bunch of retired Navy ships, and animal experiments on the deck. Goats eating hay on the deck of an aircraft carrier while a solid white pillar of smoke miles wide jets through the air, never dissipating, widening, evaporating millions of gallons of ocean and shipyard steel. I wake up. 4:25am, still in my single mattress on the floor of the attic. Spend an hour sleepless, trying to figure out if it was a dream.

74

I'd sleep in two shifts of two hours a day. On some weekends, I'd sleep all day, sometimes Nick would drag me to a show in Chicago, and sometimes one of my jobs would tell me to come in on a Sunday. But during the five day stretch, it was two hours, two shifts, and no room for an extra nap. At night, I'd run the punch press. Full of caffeine and thick with drowsiness, my hands could whip the beast while my head zoned into nothingness. Part up, part on, hands back, buttons down, watch it cycle, part out. Part up, part on, hands back, buttons down, watch it cycle, part out. It continued, methodically, like a song, like a dance beat I could barely hear through the bright yellow earplugs that made it sound underwater. Keep it going, try to hit the rate, watch the parts, do everything exact. For ten hours, I'd memorize the rhythm. Driving home, I'd feel the trailer parts in my still-dirty hands. In bed, my ears would ache with the dull thud of the big press, as it slammed the steel into shape. Conforming. A big bully, crushing the pieces, making them all the same... When I slept, I would enter REM before my head hit the pillow. I'd be back at the press. Part up, part on, hands back, buttons down, watch it cycle, part out. I'd look down at it. A human ear. Part up, part on, hands back, buttons down, watch it cycle, part out. I'd inspect the part: a human tongue, with a grommated hole neatly trimmed in the middle. A quick look into my parts bin showed it full of toes, noses, ears, penises, vulvas, and babies hands and feet. Repulsed? No, my brain knew that it needed as much REM as I could get. Don't stop the press while it's running. Don't stop the dream while it's running. It takes five minutes for the flywheel to stop, another five to start. Just walk to another dream.

Eating/Reading

A brief look at the books I digested in March

Richard Rhodes - Dark Sun

This telephone book sized tome about the development of the H-bomb drilled away a decent amount of my reading time for the first half of the month, but was worth every minute. Rhodes bounces between the US program to develop a fission explosion and the Russian program of espionage which leads to their first atomic and later thermonuclear bombs. His attention to detail is simply incredible, but the text isn't just a snoozer of a reference manual. It's got great writing, the type that focuses on the human element and builds dynamics that make you stay up all night turning pages in a fury to find out what happens. I saw Rhodes speak last August and managed to talk to him for two minutes about a fiction story I wrote about the possible use of nukes in Korea. While signing my books, he dropped more facts than I found in 80 straight hours of library research. Well worth the hardcover price, but hopefully it will be in softcover soon. While you're waiting, check out his Making of the Atomic Bomb from a few years back, it is equally as incredible.

Charles Bukowski - Dangling in the Tournefortia

I used to tell novice Buk readers to go for Burning in Water Drowning in Flame as a good primer, but I think this book changed my mind. This 1981 collection of poetry features so many short, catchy one-pagers and complete rolling-on-the-floor-in-laughter pieces that I kept reading and re-reading poems in utter joy. Bukowski's doing better when this book was penned, and isn't eating dog food and living on the street, but he's still struggling with the bills, the women, the horses, and the fucked up system of the place we call America. And if you're familiar with the Hostage CD of his Redondo Beach reading, you'll find old favorites like "on the hustle" and "a poetry reading". An essential volume for the Bukowski fan, and a good starter for those curious or just wanting to read some good lines about the bad life.

Henry Rollins - Art to Choke Hearts & Pissing in the Gene Pool

These two books are now published in a single volume on

Rollins' own 2.13.61 publishing company. You should be able to pick up a copy at most hip book stores (i.e. not in a mall) or at some bigger music stores like Tower. Anyway, this is older stuff by the R-man, and pretty good at that. He's spending all of Art... dealing with fucked-up and traumatic situations, like robberies, rapes, death, mutilation, and everything that makes this great country a horror. It's not something that you read to get off on people killing each other; this isn't a Rambo film. It does paint a picture of the horror and inequality of the human condition, though. Pissing... also does the same, but mixes more autobiographical content and broadens the scope a bit. If you think Rollins is just some funny guy who was in that Charlie Sheen movie, pick this up and it will change your mind. This is probably my favorite of his books - I hate to say it, but the death of Joe Cole really fucked him up and his later book Now Watch Him Die really didn't do as much for me (although it's very powerful as well). Hopefully his next upcoming fiction book will get back to the roots in these books and build another epic.

Charles Bukowski - The Days Run Away Like Wild Horses Over the Hills

When I read Bukowski, it's usually a few books at a time. This month was no exception. Days is a 1969 poetry collection, which brings together poems from the late-60's era of Buk, including some classic chapbooks like Run With the Hunted (the '62 chapbook, not the '93 anthology) and Longshot Pomes for Broke Players. The stuff flows well, albeit some of it seems to be a bit more experimental for the basically straightforward style of Bukowski. One of my favorite poems of his, "a division", can be found on p.68. And there's a great shot of Bukowski climbing onto a railroad car, probably one of the oldest photos I've seen of him. The only real downer about the book is that some of the poems were written after the death of his long-term girlfriend, Jane. That material gets pretty damn depressing, even for the master of the dark half of life. But it's pretty dead-on stuff, classic Bukowski at its best.

Nikolai Gogol - Diary of a Madman and Other Stories

Gogol was to Russian Lit what Hendrix was to rock and roll. Dostoyevsky was right on when he said "We have all come from under [the short story]'The Overcoat'". And that mean, postmodern motherfucker of a writer Nabokov

also said that “After reading Gogol... one is apt to see bits of his world in the most unexpected places.” Right on, Vlad. This collection (it’s on Penguin, but there are others, including a Penguin 60’s edition you can buy for only a buck) contains the classic “The Overcoat”, along with “Diary..” and another gem, “The Nose”. Gogol is the type of writer who uses few words and spins elaborate scenery by describing characters and surroundings with one or two peculiar traits instead of 20 or 40 typical ones. He might describe how fucked up someone’s nose is and avoid all other details, but you’ll synthesize a complete and accurate mental image from his twisted image. All of his stories are full of incredible satire and allegory about the situation out in Russialand back in the mid to late 1800’s, which I didn’t completely get because I’m an idiot when it comes to the country’s history. But the stories flow like blood on a white sheet, and even through the translation, it makes you wonder why he isn’t read in writing 101 classes. Oh, and Gogol destroyed most of his writings after he got involved in some religious shindig late in his life, and he died from an extreme regimen of fasting. A real one-two testimony about the fucked-up-idness of both religion and that Slim-Fast shit.

Kurt Brecht - The 30-Day Diarrhea Diet Plan: Kurt Brecht, the lead singer of the old punk band DRI, has his own publishing company called Dirty Rotten Publishing, and this is one of his half-dozen or so books he’s written, printed, and marketed by himself over the years. His writing is fairly basic and straightforward, but his stories are always incredible. Every time I read any of his books, I want to run away from my own life for a year, then return and write a book about it. This book details a month between touring and recording when he headed off into Mexico for some exploring. And no, he wasn’t on the beaches of Cancun or even drinking tequila down in tijuana: his stories take place in small Mexican villages, where they slept in grass huts, ate oysters and iguanas, found peyote, and bought coral beads from the prisons. They go skin diving, get in a bus wreck, explore the whorehouses and drug cultures of the underground, and explore the ruins - all with a budget of almost zero. The whole time, Brecht’s friend Kenny is terribly ill, which brings us to the title. He lost 30 pounds that month thanks to Montezuma’s Revenge. The book is funny, an incredibly fast read because you can’t put it down, and makes me

wish I could take a month off work to wander the cities south of the border. Of course, I don’t want to lose the 30 pounds that way... You can find Brecht’s books at Tower, or by sending a buck to Dirty Rotten Press for a catalog at 2440 16th St. #279/San Fran, CA/94103.

And so on...

Not much else to report here this month. I’m hoping to get Rumored finished by the end of May. No concrete plans other than that, I’ve been too busy to think of things like publishers, agents, etc. If you’ve got any clues or ideas for me, I’m responsive to them.

I’m trying to get this thing to more people this month. If you’ve got a friend or know someone who might be interested, tell them to drop me a line or a SASE and I’ll set them up. If you’re a zine publisher, let me know. I don’t print ads, but I’d be more than willing to spread fliers in my correspondence if you’d want to do the same.

Also, a couple of you have asked about the possibility of an electronic version of this publication. I actually tried to take this document and convert it to Adobe Acrobat, but it didn’t work. Because I don’t want to spend 20 hours a month making an HTML version, you’ll have to suffer with the thought that I’m killing trees like mad out here.

Colophon (for those curious): I save my monthly mail, which I read using the vm package in emacs, and then edit it and all of the other parts, also in emacs. The first contact with the evil Microsoft empire is when I use FrameMaker4 to pull it together. I used too many fonts to count, sorry.

Send all comments, info, hate mail, death threats, pipe bombs, trades, free stuff, food, and court summons (summonses? summi?) to:

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Air in the Paragraph line is published monthly, within a few days of the beginning of the month. Issues are a buck or postage or trade or whatever. Back issues are available for a SASE or a buck. Issues are free to prisoners and anyone who sends me abnormal stuff in the mail. Trades are welcome. Books, music, or zines for review are welcome but I can’t promise I’ll get to all of them. I do review all cars, pornography, and food which is sent to me. Sorry, no ads. I support the environment: this was printed with 100% recycled ideas and thoughts.

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