



# **PORCELAIN**

**Jess C Scott**

## **Praise for *Jess C Scott***

“Author / Illustrator Jess C Scott deserves kudos from RCGNTN. Determined to break away from the traditional writer’s mold, Jess’s work exudes pure honesty that deserves praise. If passion does not take the form of illustrating your own book art as well, we don’t know what does.”

— *RCGNTN Magazine*

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“Though [EyeLeash: A Blog Novel] is far different from the fluffy *Twilight* series, don’t be surprised if Jess C Scott’s books spark the next reading revolution. Scott’s original voice and style don’t just tell a story, they tell the way of teenage life.”

— K.M.D., Amazon Review

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“Dear Jess, I just wanted to say how much I’ve enjoyed your writing: your writing reflects something genuine, something real, about our generation that few writers have had the talent or the courage to uncover. Thank you.”

— e-mail from a reader

**Other Books by *Jess C Scott***

EYELEASH: A BLOG NOVEL

4:PLAY

*(a contemporary cocktail of erotic short stories)*

THE DEVILIN FEY

*(novella in 4:Play)*

THE INTERN

*(upcoming "Sins07" series / Fall 2010)*

THE OTHER SIDE OF LIFE

*(upcoming cyberpunk/urban fantasy series / Fall 2010)*

PORCELAIN

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1. Poetry / General 2. Fiction / Short Stories 3. Essays

Summary: A collection of both new and previously published short stories, poems, and essays, by Jess C Scott. *Porcelain* offers a personal draft of the author's navigation through a world that is fantastical, offbeat, ironic, unexpected, and true.

**Notes:**

'Porcelain' was originally published in *Word Riot*.

'Reflexology Class' and an excerpt of 'Black Velvet' were originally published in *Blink Fiction*.

'No Answer' was originally published in *Flashshot* and *55 Words*.

'The Evil Man' was originally published in *The Clockwise Cat*.

'Evolution' was originally published in *Xenith*.

'The Boy at The Train Station' and 'Trouble' were originally published in *Conceit Magazine*.

'Playing the Flute' was originally published in *Unleashed Online*.

'Wired' was originally published in *The Battered Suitcase/Vagabondage Press*.

'Grotto' was originally published in *Word Slaw*.

'-quote me-' was originally published in *ITCH Magazine*.

'Avalon' was originally published in *Mirror Dance*.

'Haiku Humor / out Of control / Your Best Face (And Body) Forward' were originally published in *Madswirl*.

'Death of a Lion King' was originally published in *Every Day Poets*.

'4 Fib Poems' were originally published in *AlienSkin Magazine*.

'Slates of Grey' was originally published in *AMULET*.

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## **SHORT STORIES / FLASH FICTION**

*I based the ghoulish character of 'Jess' after someone I knew (still know) in real life.*

### **My Chance Encounter**

I peered at the old house from between the bars of its rusty iron gates. The outer walls of the building were crawled over with vines and ivy. I could spot layers of paint cracking and flaking off, revealing the layer of dirt-red brick underneath.

I gave the gates a push—they swung open without a creak, which surprised me. Something about the old house was fascinating. It had a mysterious charm that lured my senses. I walked in on the stone pathway and waited on the doorstep for a moment. I felt like a guest, awaiting a very elusive but gracious host, the house itself.

“Hellooo,” I called out in a low voice. I rapped my knuckles against the door. Just in case there was anyone inside.

Nothing but quiet. I turned the knob and went in.

The sharp scent of fresh pine shot up my nose in an instant. The house was perfumed with it. The interior decorations of the house were lavish, though it must have looked even more opulent during the days when people were actually living in this place. I saw three gold-framed portraits—of a duke, a soldier on his horse with a scarlet-plumed helmet, and a little girl with soft golden curls standing by a window.

I heard a sound just then—

*“Flumph.”*

It came from upstairs. What was that? I was hit with visions, snippets of a headless ghost, a zombie that had been



thrown back up from the dead, a body lying face down in a pool of blood...a murder, right here in the house I was in! Blood would be seeping through the ceiling...I was just letting my imagination go free. I knew I would be testing my luck going to investigate, but the itch to find out was too much. There was no way I could walk away and simply forget about it either.

I made my way cautiously to a velveteen staircase at the end of the living room. A broken chandelier hung right at the top. The glass shattered and tinkled as a breeze blew in. It made some of the little hairs on the back of my neck stand on end.

And then, even *that* came to a freeze point. A figure had appeared on the top stair, an emaciated, skeletal *non*-visible figure, much like a flickering hologram. Its face was steeped in the furthest throes of pain and remorse. Ragged clothes clung to its drawn frame. Pallid, wasted skin stretched grimly over its bones. Most unnerving was the figure's haunting familiarity.

My eyes came to rest on the figure's right arm, and I gave a slight shriek as I recognized the faint glimmer of a distinct mark there. There was a thin outline of a heart just at the fold of the inner elbow. It was a permanent mark, no longer a daily scribble with a red ballpoint pen. I jumped back in shocking disbelief.

"Jess," I gasped, "it's *you!*"

The figure tossed its, 'her' I mean, head back. She placed a hand on her hip, in typical fashion, condescendingly.

"Well of *courssse* it is," she hissed. "Who else could it be?"

Who else? Like the former occupants of the house, perhaps?

"I hate asking you this," I ventured, "but...what are you doing here?"

Jess, the hologram Jess, shook her head as she stared at me with hollow, sunken eyes devoid of all expression. She looked as if she wanted to cry, but I knew better. She wouldn't take her fixed gaze off me for a microsecond.

"What am I *doing* here?"

Jess flapped both arms down into the air in annoyance: “*Flumph.*” So that was the source of the sound. Jess whirled around, crossed her hands behind her, and paced slowly up and down, speaking her thoughts aloud.

“Not even a ‘how’ve you been’...or ‘it’s good to see you’...you’ve no manners at all, you’ve never learned. I think you’ll never learn anyway, *Simon.*”

She said my name as if she had seven lemon warheads in her mouth. She looked me down, from my cap turned sideways to my favorite white T-shirt, Levi’s 501 jeans and favorite pair of old skate shoes. She shook her head, again!

“I was so stupid to have even liked you,” she spat out.

Even after dying, she couldn’t ‘get over me’.

“Look, Jess—”

“DON’T YOU ‘LOOK JESS’ AT ME!!!”

That was Jess alright—except that her madwoman screeches were more shrill than *ever*. It ripped through the head like a high-pitched supremely distorted guitar solo riff from ear to ear. I couldn’t help but back up against the nearest wall. She was floating down the stairs now, and believe me, most people would have already run out the front door if they still had their heads on to will them to take flight.

“Okay, let’s start again,” I breathed out, slowly. “How’d this happen?”

The wavering possibility of something quite close to sanity passed over Jess’s face.

“I...I’d...gotten this note.” She rested her chin on a propped up hand, resting that arm on the other. “I don’t know from who, it was anonymous.”

“Note?”

“Yeah...I don’t have it with me anymore. But I can remember what it said, word for word, I think.”

I let her jog her memory for a little bit.

“2p.m, crossroads, meet you there and we’ll get to Hell. Do remember not to tell.”

“My, that rhymes too.”

“*Si-mon.*”

That tone had not changed too.

“I’d figured that crossroads...must have meant the

junction three blocks away from school. It's the closest thing to a 'crossroad' around here."

Jess gave a tired sigh.

"There's not many cars on the road at that time, so I decided to go over and have a look."

"Even when you had no idea who'd written you something like that? Or that it wasn't for real?"

"How'd I know if I didn't find out?"

Yeah, that was so like Jess.

The thing was, she hadn't a clue I was just playing along, looking like I didn't know what she was talking about until she explained about it more. The note from hell? I'd placed it in her locker when she was at Biology class. I knew she'd go out and try to figure out whatever the note said, even though it was all just a load of bullshit. She was into things like metaphysics, Wicca, "astral-projection," spells...

Seriously, I never meant to kill her or anything. I will say though that I always found Jess the scariest, meanest, weirdest person *alive*. I'd seen the way she would buy some people and, man. She'd use them for homework, use them for attention, everything. You've got to have met her or been with her to know what I mean. Don't get me wrong, I wasn't "with her" like we were boyfriend and girlfriend. God, I'd shoot my own self before anything like that to happen.

We've kind of known each other since I transferred to this school. Simply cos she's had a huge crush on me since she first set her eyes on me, and my life has never known peace from then. The letters she wrote me, the things she'd do in class, all the hot, single, *available* girls she'd chased away from me! What'd I do to deserve all that?

So my friend, Josh, and I...Josh's older brother had just gotten a new gun. We decided to try it out, and I swear, we only meant to send a couple of bullets pass Jess' head, or near her feet or something, just to scare the shit out of her, and have a blast as well. Turns out that Josh had the naturally better aim between us, and the one first shot was all it took to kill her on the spot.

We drove thirty miles out after that to get rid of the gun. We'd seen enough TV to know that leaving any kind of

evidence around would be suicide for us. Josh's brother would just have to get a new one.

I don't know why Jess liked me so much, why she just couldn't get off my back for once.

"Sooooo anyway, Si-mon..." she started with a pathetic whimper. She started to bring a hand up to *twirl her hair*. It was kinda horrific watching that bony finger reach out to touch the matted strands of hair. "How's...life been?"

"Oh, I've been good."

Jess sighed again. "Always the same, eh?"

I flashed her the biggest smile that I could, just short of a grimace. I decided to go on to say some more, in case she'd decide to get mad and start screaming the walls down or pulling the house apart (though I wondered how she'd do that).

"I'm sorry for what happened to you," I said, looking her in the eye. Holding the eye contact for just the right amount of time was quintessential, or she'd know something was up.

It worked. She actually just smiled, and left it at that. I guessed she was getting to feel a little mushy too...I could see it in the way she was holding herself, trying to hold herself together maybe, and she didn't say anything for a while.

I didn't want to ask her much more. I honestly didn't really care. I just wanted to get out and get on with my day, continue with some computer games (World of Warcraft!) or something. I should have just walked on by this damned old house, instead of getting myself stuck with of all people, strange freaky Jess, here.

"You know, I actually have something to show you."

What could it be?

"Come upstairs with me?"

Jess floated up the staircase again, and I could either follow her, or take my chance and bolt out the front door as fast as I had ever run out of anywhere in my entire life. For the most inexplicable of reasons, I actually chose to follow her.

I made my way up the staircase, my footsteps a dull resounding thud upon each step. Was it me, or were the steps that I was taking getting progressively heavier, louder,

as I reached for the top?

Jess had gone into the last room, at the end of the common walkway towards the left. Unlit candles lined the side of the walkway...*ah*...that was where the scent of fresh pine was coming from. All the other room doors were closed, and I could see from where I was that the open room was empty. There was just the wooden panels that it was made of, and nothing else.

She floated to the window, and I followed. I was half-expecting the wooden panels of the room to cave in on me, or swallow me whole. I didn't know what to expect.

"Look."

I was looking at Jess. I felt bad for thinking this, but I thought that her new look suited her better than when she had been alive.

"You see that row of spikes down there?"

Spikes? What'd spikes be doing here? She pointed out the window, and I went over to the edge to have a look.

It's the last thing that I saw. Well, sort of.

The next thing I knew, I remember feeling horrible—I felt like goo, like I was just made out of muck, to tell you the truth. I was looking at my hand. It looked like rotting flesh. There was no stench, but the sight of it was quite something. I was grossed out at first. But I got pretty used to it after a short while, and it was quite cool actually because it looked like something you'd see on Ripley's, or the Discovery Channel. I'd never had my real hand looking like this before.

I looked up and saw Jess still by the window, waving to me. She was pointing to the row of spikes too. *That's* when I freaked out proper.

The morbid part wasn't the fact that the spikes were covering a spot that was intended to be a flowerbed—the mangled bits of flesh splattered and caught in between the metal were *me*. What was physically left of it, I guessed. I felt like throwing up, and I did, just that, nothing exactly came spewing out. But I was still left with the feeling that I'd puked.

I deduced that fine, Jess had somehow found out that I had been the cause of all of this, and that I was to blame. I'd

have to accept bravely my fate whatever it was.

That all changed when she drifted merrily down to meet me in the garden.

“I don’t care, Simon.”

Boy, did I have it coming.

“Call me evil, selfish, crazy—but I want you to be with me, so like it or not—there!”

What could that mean?

“You pushed me...” I worked out as quickly as I could in my mind, which I still had with me somehow, “you killed me, so that I can...be...with *you*?”

I look at her straight in the face, hollow sunken eyes and gaunt shrunken skin and all.

“In death?”

Jess grinned, nodding her head up and down.

So she hadn’t a clue at all that I was the reason behind it! I was absolutely *fuming*: did Jess think this was *funny*?! But then, I felt I kind of deserved what I had coming, what I *did* get, ending up being dead, cos I did kill her, although if you do consider Josh, I did it indirectly.

“I still find you hot, even when you look like this.”

I looked at Jess quizzically. Hot?—as a living-dead corpse-spirit whatever? It was the last thing I expected to hear, right then. That was supposed to make me feel better? I couldn’t take this.

Maybe she was playing me this time around. This was her way of revenge, and now I was stuck here with my whole life cut short, all because of a girl totally off her rocker wanting to have me to herself. Maybe we were both going to Hell. Or likely, I was already there. And I would be, for all eternity. What was I going to do now?

“C’mon, it’ll be more fun than ever, you’ll see. You can fly for one, if you’re here.”

Strangely, she was sounding more normal now that we were both, dead.

Or maybe I was just seeing and hearing her differently, for the first time. I shouldn’t say for the first time ‘in my life’.

Being me, it didn’t take long to adjust to the new way of things. Yeah it sucks sometimes, you get to see people eating

their hot fudge ice-creams and sipping their milkshakes and stuff like that, but you can do a whole lot more too. We'll probably figure what to do better with ourselves, once we do.

Jess won, this time. She really got even with me, and after spending these few weeks with her, I find her cool. Wait till she finds out that I'm the one who got her, first.

*The next four stories were/are expanded "midday musings."*

## **Reflexology Class**

"Angie, relax." Shanti looked in Angie's direction. "You don't need to overdo it."

Angie simply laughed.

The yoga instructor shook her head. "No one would guess what you really do for a living."

"What I've done, you mean," said Angie.

"Oh? You're retiring? Remember to exhale...slow, deep breaths. Release the tension from your body."

Angie stretched her leg muscles. "I've had enough excitement from my work as a secret agent. Besides, don't you think my body deserves the break?"

Shanti nodded. "What'll you be doing then?"

Angie glanced at Shanti, the corners of her mouth turning up just the slightest.

"Don't tell me you've more plans to take over the world? You're a young mother now! You have to learn to take it easy and relax."

"Shanti, you're over-reacting. You're supposed to be cool and collected. You're the guru, not me."

"Let's not banter, dear."

"All right, all right."

The two ladies were on the last section of their yoga routine.

"So...what's the secret?"

Angie needed no time to formulate her thoughts. She had been toying around with the idea for some time. "I'm going to be teaching reflexology. But there's a catch."

"I knew it!"

"You'll love it." Shanti's next client would be arriving in two minutes. Angie wasted no time. "You know how feet have pressure points?"



“Yes, of course.”

“I’m gonna start a class where people can learn reflexology—for grander purposes, other than ‘alternative medicine’, or ‘holistic healing’.” Angie drew quotes in the air to make her point.

“I’m not too sure I get you.”

“I’m tired of hearing friends complain about their significant others,” Angie replied. “The lack of attention. The lack of appreciation. The lack of affection, et cetera.”

“And?”

“So—I’ll teach them ways of wreaking havoc on their partners’ bodies. I picked up an ancient secret from a Zen monk on one of my travels, on anti-pressure points. He said people always laugh at him, until he demonstrates the method on them.”

Shanti raised an eyebrow. “How does it work?”

“Just think of it as reverse reflexology. Anyway, if all goes well, the recipients will think it’s a wonderful foot massage, something non-abrasive, you know. A reward for being ‘the special one’ in their SO’s life.”

“Hmm. When’s your first class?”

“Next Monday—I’m totally psyched.”

The doorbell rang. Shanti headed towards the front door, without saying a word.

Angie had a sinking feeling for a moment. *Maybe she doesn’t think it’s a great idea*, she thought. *I would have liked her opinion. Maybe I’ll call her over the weekend—I do value her input.*

Just then, Shanti turned to look at her. “Do you have any vacancies?”

“Yes, two.”

“Great! Count me in—and my next client. He’d definitely be interested. I’ll introduce you.”

## The Chef

“You have to be joking.”

“Am not,” said the head waiter. “You know how unpredictable The Jellyfish is. She’s coming over with her entourage in half an hour.”

Mr. Duponte sighed.

“Is the crew assembled?”

“Aye, sir. At your command.”

Mr. Duponte was the most respected maitre d’ in the city of Wicknshyre. The hotel he managed had rave reviews time and again, save for the pages of *The Ideal Palette*. The hotel restaurant never seemed to cater to the editor of the socialite publication. It was always the same two restaurants that had stellar ratings in the magazine—and they were run by personal friends of the chief editor herself.

Mr. Duponte did his best. He had served The Ideal Palette reviewers the rarest oysters from the deepest oceans, the most exotic delicacies from countries unheard of even to geography professors, the most unique blends of cocktails to satisfy the most demanding of tastebuds.

Still, the entire group remained unimpressed.

Mr. Duponte suddenly decided on a strategy he had never executed before. It was so wild and unthinkable—he would be risking his job to do it—but he’d had enough of the magazine’s unfair critiques of every single restaurant in town, apart from the regular flawless two favorites.

“Ms. Zudon,” Mr. Duponte said to the head chef, “I want you to do this for our friends at *The Ideal Palette*, who are visiting today. Do not worry as I will take full responsibility for whatever happens!”

\*

Mr. Duponte and Ms. Zudon held their breath as The Jellyfish and three co-editors sat down to the final dish. She was known as The Jellyfish because of the amount of things

she had attached on her—reading glasses round her neck, as well as a spiral notebook and pen, a hanging wristwatch, a scarf which she thought she made fashionable as a belt.

The Jellyfish didn't say a word as she swallowed her last mouthful. All the people in the room waited.

“Mr. Duponte.”

She licked her lips once.

“I had a bad day, but I had a fantastic dinner.”

She clapped her hands twice, and the editors of *The Ideal Palette* swished themselves and their coats out the exit.

Ms. Zudon stared at Mr. Duponte in amazement. Mr. Duponte himself, was wide-eyed.

You see, he had made the deduction that people are what they eat. Seeing the rotten personality of The Jellyfish, he had taken the liberty to order the head chef to serve the most rancid, awful-tasting pieces of bits and scrap pieces in the kitchen that he thought would suit The Jellyfish's palette.

Little did he really expect them to.

## The Evil Man

“I’m a lawyer,” the man said first.

He looked a typical one—expensive suit, fine leather attorney’s briefcase, polished shoes. You’d smell the shoe shine if you sniffed hard enough.

The air stewardess didn’t mind him at first. She thought he was presentable and attractive. Suave. Dignified, perhaps—a lawyer with integrity who was passionate in upholding justice!

But, he was going to have a bad day...

First: he would get caught in the morning rush-hour traffic.

It’d be exceptionally horrific, due to a crash site at the cross junction before the city expressway. He would be squirming in his seat and making forty frantic phonecalls because he’d be running late for a high-profile court case.

Then it would start to rain, and it would continue raining.

When he did finally get to the courthouse, he’d have to step out and make a dash up the concrete stairs. He’d have forgotten his trusty umbrella, and his outfit would be sopping wet. Maybe he’d even drop his suitcase into a puddle of water in the commotion. Maybe he’d trip and crash headfirst onto the concrete. He’d look pathetic, like a disheveled yuppie-wannabe.

He’d be in a panic—

*“OUT OF MY WAY!”*

—he’d yell at the throng of reporters and busybodies milling about.

That would tarnish his image as the good-looking, calm, impeccable Agreeable One who never lost his cool at the media, unlike the standard others who’d show them the back of a hand to talk to, or simply turn their noses in another direction.

Who knows what would happen then?

Maybe: his secretary had gone on leave, with no replacement. Even though she’d informed him about it a

month in advance at least.

Maybe: he'd only then realize that he didn't have his all-important documents with him. What he'd burned the entire previous night for would have amounted to nothing, at this crucial time.

Maybe this time: he'd be in a situation he wouldn't be able to smooth-operate his way through. He'd played enough of his cards and would finally have to face what he had coming...

*The evil man.*

He probably deserved all of it anyway. Beneath that laudable exterior was nothing but a sleazy, mannerless brute.

The air stewardess smoothed a crinkle on her blouse. She'd been standing long enough.

Any longer and she'd be drenched in exhaust fumes and dust from the road. Not good for the fussy whining passengers on flight.

It did look like it was about to rain. This was looking like a bad day for her...

She spotted a Mercedes cab coming.

*Please stop for me, please stop for me.*

Those were luxury cabs, and she'd be lucky to get one at this time.

She stretched out a lithe arm to flag the taxi.

The driver slowed down—yes! She thought up a word of thanks to her lucky stars. She had get to the airport—now!

“Need help with that?”

The stewardess smiled sweetly.

“Yes, thank you.”

The driver stepped out—he was tall and wearing a crisp white shirt. So was the lawyer. The stewardess liked that on men.

The driver helped her with her suitcase, placing it in the boot.

Ah...she could relax at last.

The air-conditioning and freshener in the cab was cooling. The stewardess thought about the evil man a little more:

how she had been waiting for a cab for at least 15

minutes, and the self-said “lawyer” had popped out from nowhere, indicating that he was very busy and in a rush (who wasn't?), and snatched the empty cab that WOULD have stopped for her, were she given her rightful chance.

He even had the cheek to smile at her as the taxi sped off.

*Men*, she snarled. Mentally.

She took out her compact purse and touched up her lip liner.

Oh, and she'd need to touch up the mascara and dab on a few more spots of perfume too.

There was still time, yet.

*I still remember the couple, in my mind. I was at a Burger King outlet.*

## **A Full Half Hour at Least**

I'm watching a young couple, canoodling at a fast food joint. That's pretty much all they've been doing, since I got here.

They are like monkeys grooming ticks off each other. They have the special ability to gaze into the secret depths of each others' eyes at the same time.

I'm waiting for them to get on with it. All they need to do is strip off their clothing. So much has already been initiated.

They lick and sniff at each others' faces, like puppies. They face each other on two separate seats. They might as well be joined at the hip...oh, but wouldn't *\*that\** be difficult for some things now?

Both her slippers are off. I look at her bare feet underneath the table. One leg is pressed and rubbing along the jeans on the boyfriend's leg. Her toes on the other leg are curling up in release. The boyfriend looks trapped. Her fingers are interlocked behind his neck. He looks unable to escape.

Just when I think that—he somehow breaks free.

He leaves first, lingering outside. Savoring some fresh air, maybe. He puts his hands in his pockets, looking out into the distance.

She stays behind. She sits and waits, like a lioness. Her mouth turns down at the corners in quiet indignation. Her eyes never lift once from the navy-blue-jacket-clad target outdoors.

*Run!* I want to warn him. *Run for your life!!*

He's back. Takes a sip of their coffee.

And they're back to their affectation again.

I see that he's blinking a few times. He has an itch in his eye.

I realize that he cannot even rub his own eye himself—or isn't allowed to. She does it for him, cradling his head in both her hands, cooing whispers into his ear. She nurses it like one inspecting a fresh open wound.

Suddenly, she meets my tad-too-long gaze.

I am sitting quite far away, but she sees me.

But I panic not.

I pretend to look Envious. She resumes her performance of loving and lavishing. It is her duty and God-given right to do so.

I heave a sigh of relief (for myself). Finish my meal and walk out through the front door.

Boy, you are ensnared.



*I've had to change the names of the next story—the original version uses the real names of certain people I know...*

*I wrote this when I was 18, thinking back to a Christmas party when I was 16.*

## **Diva**

“Oh my *god*,” said Amber. “Martin and Emily? *Eww!* That’s just...”

She paused.

She turned her head a little to one side. She gazed upwards, posing for thought. This way everyone would see how impeccably shaped her nose and profile were. With the word she was to emphasize, she could also show off her puckered lips to perfection. She had to mouth it right. She did! And she did it with utmost flair—

“...*wrong*.”

Everyone at the table laughed.

The other bunch, the quieter not-so-cool-and-or-sociable bunch, was gathered in front of the TV. They seemed to be happy with a box of candy-canes and whatever Spongebob was up to on the screen.

“I know Martin’s, well...” said Ash.

“A nerd.” It was Heidi.

She and Amber were the Diva-Twins, and nothing would come between them. That also meant that everything they held or caught was theirs. They would share, if they were charitable, or fight it out down to the last polished fingernail. Their ‘snare’ was the group at the table for the time being, and they were in a kind mood. It was Christmas after all.

Heidi shook her head with her mouth wide open at Ash. She was in disbelief he couldn’t come up with a suitable definition for Martin. “A ‘nerd’, that’s what he is, and will always be!”

“Yeah, okay,” Ash said. “But what do you have against him?”

“Have you seen his slacks?” Amber said. She turned to face her male opponent. “His dress sense?”

“Lack of,” said Heidi.

“Word. His clothes are shared between his *four* brothers.”

“Yeah, but—”

“That’s gross, admit it.” Poor Ash never stood a chance.

“Well what about Emily then,” said Andrew. “I know she’s, well, *Em-ily*, but I want to hear it from you girls.”

So far, Trent was the only one at the table who hadn’t said anything. After all, he did define himself as a man of few words.

“Emily!” Amber exclaimed.

“She’s anti-social. She’s psycho.”

“Heidi, she’s closest to you.”

“I know, Ash. That’s how I know she’s like that.”

“She isn’t...that bad,” Trent said. He looked down at the swirls on his black skate-brand (he couldn’t exactly remember which one it was) tee. He tugged on the ends of his choppy layered hair as everyone continued looking at him. He caught a whiff of blueberry. The fragrance used in his hairspray. He hoped he hadn’t used too much tonight.

“She’s weird.” Heidi started feeling some of the shiny ringlets of her own hair, then twisted her hair up.

She let it all fall again when there wasn’t any clip, band, or chopstick to keep the hair in place.

“Emily looks the quiet sort,” Andrew said.

“You wanna know why? This is what Miss Emily does everyday.”

Heidi used the long, slender fingers on her left hand to count her points. Every finger except the thumb had a ring on that hand.

“She writes in her journal. She writes depressing poetry. She *muses*.”

Heidi looked around the table to make sure everyone was still following her. “She e-mails.” Heidi had reached her little finger. “And she goes out to get food or supplies. That’s it! That what she’s up to everyday! She hardly goes out. In fact,

she doesn't, *ever*."

"She has to," said Ash. She goes to school."

"We all have to. That isn't counted." Heidi looked over at Amber. "Isn't she going out with Martin the Martian?"

"I don't know," said Amber. She put her hands up in surrender style. "I just heard their names come up—guess they couldn't find anyone else."

"What is it she said the other time?" Heidi said. "Some comment on girls...she's said something..."

"Oh. That." said Amber. She turned to face the boys.

"We were talking online, about how girls and guys are different. There are differences, right?" The guys bobbed their heads, agreeing.

"Emily said that all girls talk too much!"

"*Well*," Heidi sneered. "That's coming from someone who reads Edgar Allan Poe all day long, and nothing else. She'd marry him if she could."

"You girls are soooo mean," said Andrew. Trent smiled. Amber and Heidi grinned back like Cheshire cats.

"So...Trent!" Amber said. He was seated directly across her. He was her present target. She leaned over, her boobs almost lightly resting on the tabletop, as one of her feet accidentally brushed against Trent's. "How's life?"

"Oh," he said. He spoke more to his socks than at anyone. "Good. It's all cool."

"Trent, you mumble too damn much," Heidi commented. "I suppose it's part of your whole image—I mean, you've got this whole skater emo punk thing going...so I suppose it suits your look."

Trent smiled shyly.

"Omigod!" Heidi said. "You're blushing!"

One or two people in front of the TV turned around. Who'd been thrown into the spotlight this time?

All eyes were on Trent, again. His chin was resting in on his chest. He looked up at everyone through the bangs that had fallen over half his face.

"Me?" he said. "You sure?" He felt his cheeks with the back of his hands, then covered them.

"Aww," said Heidi. "You're so cute." She gave Trent a

playful pat on the head.

Andrew and Ash pretended to gag.

“You know...” said Amber. She sat up. She’d just realized something and had to make her all-important point. She leaned over towards Trent again. “I think Emily likes—*you*.”

Trent slunk back against his seat. He stretched his legs out in front of him and cross them one over the other. He was half-smiling, half-frowning this time. Ash was twiddling his thumbs. Andrew looked like he was trying to read the lines on the palm of his left hand. Heidi was watching Trent as intently as the non-cool bunch focused on Spongebob.

“No, no,” started Trent. “I don’t think so.”

“Oh, *I* think so!” Amber said. And then, she remembered an incident! She put an index finger up in the air as she began her anecdote. She now had proof that she did know better about Emily’s feelings.

“Remember? During one class, her pen dropped, and you *happened* to be sitting in front. You had to turn around to give it back to her. There was this...innocent puppy-dog look on her face. I bet she was totally melting inside.”

“I don’t remember,” said Trent.

“Actually, I do,” said Ash. “I was sitting next to her that day.”

“She might be quite hot, who knows?” Everyone looked at Andrew as if he were out of his mind. “I’m just *saying*. It may be a side of her nobody’s ever seen before.”

“That’ll be crazy,” said Ash. He thought about it. He sat up. He ran a hand across Trent’s shoulder, and whispered Trent’s name in a lusciously seductive mock lady’s voice.

“Oh crap, I feel *sick*,” said Amber.

“Yeah me too.”

“Let’s change the subject, shall we?”

“You’re the one who started it.”

“Did not!”

“Did toooo!”

“Heidi!” Amber gave Heidi a poke on the side of her tummy. They engaged in one of their friendly ‘scuffles’. It was either this, or a verbal sparring that would exclude all the other guys at the table, so they chose this instead.

*“Kids!”*

Heidi’s mom came sweeping out of the kitchen. Andrew shot a quick glance at Ash, who looked mighty glad that the mum hadn’t come in when he was doing his 5-second impersonation of a sexy hot chick. Heidi’s mom was wearing a classic red and white apron. She carried a pristine chocolate log cake, with light pink frosting dripped over it. It looked delectable.

“Dearie, are all your friends here yet?”

“Yeah, just Emily and Martin,” said Heidi. “Everyone else is here.”

“Oh, are they coming?”

“I guess, they texted that they would be.”

“My, we’ll have to wait for them then.” Back went the mom into the kitchen.

“No, no, *no!*” shrieked Ash. “Shucks, I want some of that cake.”

Amber sighed.

“I don’t see why you had to call them.”

“Well, how could I *not?*” Heidi said. “This is a church meet, you can’t exclude two people just like that.”

“Yeah but they’re...”

“I’ll text Emily,” said Trent. “See where she is.”

“You have her phone number?” said Heidi. “Amazing! Does she pick up the phone?”

“*Heidi*, let’s not get started again.”

“Oh all right.”

“Ah...everybody! This is something funny,” said Amber. She got back the attention of all at the table. “I went to a club the other night, Coco Latte.”

She wasn’t so sure if it was Coco Latte. Either that place, or DXO. No matter, both were cool chill-out spots where the beautiful people hung out.

All she had seen was a gay guy, a transvestite to be exact. But being one half of the Diva-Twins, she used up every second she had to the maximum.

“There was a girl...she was Malay. Quite boobsy. Definitely in a push-up. She had nice legs too and if I’m not wrong she was in Jimmy Choos.”

Heidi gasped.

“She was walking, like this.” Amber got up from her chair and struck a pose. She was poised like a model at a photo shoot. She placed one hand on one hip, sticking the elbow out. She rested the elbow of the other hand on the other hip, two fingers up in a V-shape to show a cigarette. Then, she sashayed in the way that some overtly really gay men do really well. There were some laughs by her audience at the dinner table. Amber dropped the bomb at that time too—“And *she* was a *transvestite!*”

Suddenly, there was a ring. It was the doorbell.

“I’m coming!” said Heidi. “Goodness,” she said to the people at the table, “that must be...”

“*Emily,*” Ash said spookily. Trent looked bored and absent-minded, but he was too nice to say anything.

It was. Emily had come with Martin too.

“Emily!” Heidi said. She couldn’t say anymore.

“Hey!” Trent could see the two in full view from where he was seated. He was a little amused at how quiet everyone was. He asked what everyone else wanted to, but didn’t for some reason.

“What happened to *you?*” He looked over at Martin then. “Oh, hey to you too.”

Martin acknowledged Trent’s greeting by moving his eyebrows up. Martin, who had hardly ever talked to anyone, was in a crisp white shirt. He looked like he’d come from some sort of formal event, or perhaps there was one he was just about to attend. He’d changed his glasses from a dorky plastic one before to a frameless one, gotten a change of hairstyle, and a broader set of shoulders from recent trips to the gym.

“Stop looking at us like that,” Emily said.

She’d put on gloss and eyeliner (less than usual), and was dressed no different from most of the other girls in the room. She had taken off her glasses and let her sleek, brown hair down, and gotten blunt bangs which rested just below her eyebrows. That was all. But somehow, she suddenly looked chic. She was leaner, taller, sassier, and simply, effortlessly hotter than anyone else.

Martin sat down on the sofa in front of the TV. Emily stood around in between the two groups.

“You can have my seat,” Trent offered. He stood up and gestured to Emily.

“It’s ok,” said Heidi. “I’ll get you a chair.” She disappeared into one of the rooms nearby.

“Whoa,” said Ash. “You look really different!”

“Better, I hope,” Emily said. “Grew my hair out.”

“It’s been ages since we last saw you,” said Andrew.

“Yeah, I’ve been doing the stuff I always do,” said Emily. She played with her fingers for a while, fiddling with them before looking up again. “Well! So how’s everyone been?”

Amber was staring at Emily.

“Yes?” asked Emily. “Something wrong?”

“Wow,” Amber said. She shook her head, quickly, as if to kick the brain out of an extended snooze. “Sorry for staring. It’s just that you look...really good!” She was yammering through her teeth, trying to keep from gritting them. She couldn’t believe it. Emily hadn’t undergone an extreme makeover, so what kind of transformation could there’ve been?

Mostly, it was the hair that had changed. The clothes. That couldn’t have been all. What was it? A new knockout range of perfume? Emily wasn’t wearing any. Beauty sleep round the clock? A high-end hair and skincare range? A charm? A spell? Plain old X-factor? She had to know the secret!

Heidi came back with a seat for Emily. Emily thanked her and went on to talk about her day, and how she had done for the recent exams. She’d done well. She was talking as if everyone was a close friend. Most of them had actually been together as a class for a long time, though they tended to hang out in cliques instead of mixing around freely. But Emily was completely at ease.

The Diva-Twins looked on with morbid fascination. The people who were fixed on the TV had come to sit or stand around the table. Emily wasn’t the only one talking, but she seemed to be included in whoever’s conversation it was. All the guys were giving her their complete attention. She sat

right next to Trent, who had things to say now that she was here.

Moments ago, there was almost an actual divider between the two groups. Everyone in the room was drawn to Emily, like honeybees to nectar.



*The next five short stories trace my “evolution” as a writer, somewhat. Perhaps the psychologically-inclined might be able to point out some interesting elements from the realm of my sub-consciousness (and feel free to let me know at [missfey@gmail.com](mailto:missfey@gmail.com))...*

## **[1] How Dinosaurs Appeared**

*[Story I wrote as a 9-year-old]*

Long, long ago, there were only volcanoes and the seas and sand on earth. There wasn't a living thing that lived on land.

One day, a strange thing happened. Rain fell and one of the droplets fell on a big, round rock. The rock suddenly became smooth and colorful. Then, it rolled all by itself into a big, dark cave. There it lay for 364 days.

On the 365<sup>th</sup> day, there was a cracking sound. The egg had hatched! Out came a creature which was green and small. The creature was one meter tall. It walked on two legs and ate plants. Its name was Hypsilophodon (hip-sill-loff-d-don). It was a new creature, a living thing, something that lived on land. It was...a 'dinosaur'.

Rain soon fell again. Another droplet fell on a huge rock. The same thing happened. On the 365<sup>th</sup> day, it hatched and another dinosaur was made. It was called...Iguanodon (ig-wan-o-don).

Iguanodon was a much larger dinosaur than Hypsilophodon. It had a bony spike on each thumb that it used to fight off its enemies.

Time passed. More eggs were made, and hatched, and more dinosaurs appeared.

Dinosaurs ruled the earth for millions of years. Dinosaurs were the very, very first creatures made to live...on earth.

## [2] Journal of Robinson Crusoe

*[Story I wrote as an 11-year-old]*

30 September 1659

I, poor miserable Robinson Crusoe, was shipwrecked during a dreadful storm. My ship almost sank. I came onshore the dismal unfortunate island which I called “The Island of Despair”. I crawled to a palm tree and there, I rested.

31 September 1659

I got up to find my ankle bleeding. A short distance away, a green whipsnake slithered away. I quickly bandaged my ankle with a piece of my clothing. Fortunately, the snake was not poisonous. I staggered to my feet and started to explore. The island looked quite desolate. I was wondering what sort of creature could be lurking about when suddenly, I caught sight of a footprint. A *human* footprint! I started to look around, searching for a place where someone could be in. All of a sudden, a net dropped down on me. As my penknife had been lost during the storm, I could do nothing but shout, “HELP!” Then, tribesmen came out. There were two, no three, no four, five, six! Six tribesmen out of nowhere. They cut the net, tied up my hands, and told me to walk straight on. I could do nothing but obey.

When I got to their tiny cove, I expected them to eat me up or do something even more disastrous. Instead, they fed me with yam and other tropical food. I ate and drank to my heart’s content. After I ate and drank, they even gave me a very small but comfortable room. I pretended to go to sleep, so I could hear and listen to their every word. I waited.

Suddenly, I heard one of them muttering in another language. They grabbed hold of me and dragged me to an

underground pit. I screamed but to no avail. I fell down, down, down. Deeper and deeper and deeper.

2 October 1659

I stood up. I remained very tensed. For two whole days I had been lying here. Suddenly, there was a bone-chilling growl. I looked up to find a ferocious, enormous wolf with eyes like glowing amber, cautiously moving toward me. I knew I had no choice but to fight. It was a fight to the death.

Before I could react, the wolf pounced on me. I landed on the hard, cold floor, the wolf's hot breath breathing down on me. I saw a sharp dagger beside me, probably from one of the unfortunate victims before me. My only chance. I grabbed it and plunged it with all my might into the wolf's heart. The wolf fell to the ground with its last howl. I had won the fight. I climbed up a creeping vine hanging down from up above. I climbed up, to find all six tribesmen and many more, congratulating me with showers of gifts. I was the first to kill the massive beast. I had claimed victory. The tribesmen, using sign language, begged me to be their new king. One of them stepped out, holding a magnificent crown, encrusted in gold and with precious gleaming gems. I took a deep breath and took the crown. They all cheered.

May I have a good and fortunate life...as king.

### [3] Moon and Night

*[Story I wrote as a 12-year-old]*

I lay back on my bed, staring at the ceiling, waiting for my eyes to adjust to the darkness. I turned to look at my shelf of cat antiques.

My two favorites were a clear, crystal figurine of a cat delicately licking her paw and of a black, velvet cat with the most marvelous green eyes ever. I had special names for these two: Moon and Night.

There was a packet of sweet jellybeans which I had hidden under my bed. I knew I shouldn't be eating in my bedroom but they were simply irresistible. I popped a few into my mouth. All of them were in the shape of mice, and they were the sweetest jellybeans I had ever tasted.

I noticed that there were less jellybeans than the night before, and I hadn't eaten any during the day. I frowned and concluded that it must have been that naughty sister of mine.

Thinking about what to say to her the next day, I dozed off.

The clock chimed twelve. Midnight. For a moment, there was an eerie silence about the room. Suddenly, a cat mewed softly. One of the figurines in my collection yawned. Another twitched its ears.

My whole collection of cats was coming to life!

Moon and Night—obviously the two leaders, eyed the room. There was a glint of mischief in their eyes and in a flash, they had landed gracefully without a sound on the floor, Moon being particularly careful not to get any of her chipped.

They crept across the room while the other cats stood on the edge of the shelf, watching them. Night quickly ran under my bed and came out—with my packet of jellybeans in his mouth! My whole collection came down the shelf, helping the two leaders drag the packet to a corner of my bedroom.

There, Moon and Night took out a few of the

mice-shaped jellybeans, carefully dividing them so that each cat would have some. Night had discovered my packet a few days ago. Ever since, the cats had been taking pieces out to have a little feast! The cats even had quiet chats between themselves while taking small nibbles out of their share!

When the feast was over, Night tried his best to fold back the packet like it was before. Moon and the others all helped too by washing off the paw prints on the floor and most importantly, clearing traces of the rather sticky jellybeans. After everything was set back in perfect order, they climbed back onto the shelf and took their places.

Dawn was coming, and I was always up early. I reached for my packet, just to see if the number was reduced again, and indeed, it was! ‘How daring of her!’ I thought angrily. ‘She must have come in while I slept at night!’

I shook my head, holding the packet in my hand wanting to go straight into my sister’s room. But first...I just *had* to inspect my perfect cat antiques.

Just then, I felt something on the packet. I looked. There were a few tiny holes at the side that looks like—teeth marks. Teeth marks? I looked at the cats and saw there was something sticky on Moon’s paw. And I was certain that Night’s green eyes blinked.

## **[4] If I Were an Animal**

*[Story I wrote as a 13-year-old]*

To be a bird—able to rule the skies and have total freedom would be wonderful indeed. Still, the sky has its limits, but the ocean?

If I were an animal, a dolphin is what I would love to be. No man has ever truly reached the very bottom of the deep Pacific, and who knows what creatures may lurk there? We do not know for sure how deep sea animals may reach, since we will not even be able to capture any footage if dolphins or whales or other beasts can in fact go down to the darkest depths of the unknown.

I would be thrilled being a dolphin—a friendly creature able to slice through the ocean surface with sharp, simple strokes. I've seen wild dolphins too, swimming gleefully in the clear blue sea, vanishing with a quiet ripple underneath the waves soon after, with only a glimpse of a shiny, glistening tail left for people to remember.

I also feel that dolphins possess an unearthly grace only known by their kind. Often we miss out on simple details, like when a dolphin hunts, for instance. I actually can feel the power of their grace when they somersault or circle beneath the waves of the sea. How great it would be to actually have this grace as a part of your everyday life!

Last but not at all the least, the freedom a dolphin has. It's very rare where an animal moves around in a group and still can have its own freedom. This is just the case for the dolphin where it always travels with the rest of the pod, and yet still has its own time to roam and swim about. The vast ocean is really limitless, apart from the unknown bottom seabed, of course.

The ocean is one place that has a million and one things to explore—each and every single day. The next time I see a dolphin, I will surely feel a pure sense of joy. After all, from writing this, I *have* been a dolphin, with graceful, sleek moves and the freedom of the seas—at least for a little while.

## [5] The Mask

*[Story I wrote as a 15-year-old]*

Walter Mathers stood still, pillow in one hand, composed. He surveyed what he had just done. All his mind could tell him was that it was over...all over.

Marsha's endless accusations. The constant dissatisfaction and annoyance bestowed upon him. They had stretched him to breaking point countless times before, but tonight was the limit. Marsha...how Walter yearned for the woman he had married to live again. That was the Marsha he had fallen in love with, not the tyrannical presence that dominated him for the past few months.

It was so simple. Walter remembered how she had suffocated in less than a minute. Strangely, guilt was non-existent. 'As a man of integrity...' a tiny voice floated in his head, trying to make him see the atrocity he had just committed, but he would not.

He could not. What was there to lose? He had everything he wanted—he had just earned the respect and prestige a politician thrives on. He had won in recent elections, and he now had a constituency that loved and supported his every move. A stark contrast to his wife, who was now gone.

Nobody would ever know what happened. No one had to. Nobody else lived in the three-storey villa in which Walter and Marsha resided. There was not even much evidence to conceal. All he had to do was uphold the façade he had always possessed, conveying the idea that all was going well in the Mathers household, and in his very life. People believed what he said. There was power in his words. It had always worked, and tonight would be no exception.

Walter envisioned what the future would have in store for him. Everything would fall into place perfectly. Why, he could even gain all the more support, indirectly. Who would not sympathize with a man whose wife had just passed away? Who would not feel some sense of compassion for a man who

had come home, only to find his beloved partner gone from this world altogether? Without any chance to say goodbye, to depart any last words of eternal love, to exchange that one last embrace of security, affection, hope...

Her eyes were still open. Walter shut them gently, almost tenderly.

He called the police captain, and filed his report.



*Shangri-la was a private blog post I wrote, in which I recalled a picturesque dream. This is unedited; I like freeform, stream-of-consciousness kind of writing, because of the small amount of resistance involved. Also, it tends to allow creativity to flow.*

**Friday, December 01, 2006**

## **Shangri-la**

Two nights ago, I felt like a crumpled pie further left to be squished on in a dark cellar's corner. Normally when I'm that tired, a lousy night of sleep follows, flooded with irretrievable dreams, and I might wake up with my bones feeling a bit like lead.

How-ever, last night made up for this nonsense by providing me with a splendiferous dream.

There were ten million people in it. Ok maybe a little less, but there were people I knew from all over—primary and secondary school, poly, flight passengers [!]...I'd dreamt that SAC (St. Anthony's Canossian Secondary School) had turned into this Pearl of the Orient Shangri-La super luxury kind of resort. There was a longggg wooden bridge suspension linking two islands over an ocean. The streets were a fusion between ancient China and Sci-fi.

There was a cheeky swashbuckler-cat with a camera round its neck...I think a dead guy featured somewhere at some staircase too :s...

The ocean was out of this world...the color of aqua on God's palette, heh...and I don't know if I was there for so long that I was traveling on some boat at nighttime. The scene looked like a pretty Hong Kong skyline against a midnight-violet backdrop...minus the glare from neon lights [and some pollution, hehe].

Then suddenly I was with a friend in a slightly dingy

shopping centre...I said "Wait, wait, don't tell me where this is..." and I was racking my brains IN THE DREAM ITSELF thinking where it was. I finally got it and said "Is this Bishan, Junction 8?" and she went "yarr!". We were observing a Caucasian guy carrying a bowl of noodles from Food Junction, up an escalator...okaaaaaaaaaaaaay.

If the dream stays in my mind til after lunch, that's my indication that it was a good/nice dream.

A little bit of TV later, dinner, and sleep again...wonder if tonight will bring anything.

No Answer *was my first 55-word exercise.*

## **No Answer**

“It's so bright!” my younger sister exclaimed. She pointed to the planet Venus, which was high in the night sky. “Will it be there always?”

“Sure it will,” I answered, straining as I thought the planet had flickered for a split second.

Suddenly it disappeared altogether.

“Could that happen to Earth?”

I couldn't answer her.

*The next two pieces are 50-word pieces, inspired by:  
real life events.*

## **The Girl with Wavy Hair**

“Don’t you know how to blow dry? I have to go in fifteen minutes!”

The salon apprentice was doing her best.

She breathed again after the client had stormed out.

“She wanted bone straight hair, when she had a perm?”

“Yes,” said the director. “And she has naturally wavy hair.”

~~\*\*~~

## **Talent Quest**

The local agency called up Mary-Sue.

“You’ve won! You’re going to be a star!”

She squealed with euphoria.

“You’ll receive intensive training in singing, dancing, acting, and emceeing!”

“How famous will I be?” she asked.

“Don’t worry. It’s pretty girls like you that live what others can only dream of.”

*I sort of expanded on the following story for The Devilin Fey, a novella that features in my short story collection, 4:Play.*

## **The Mistress**

She was fearless, and she knew every trick of the trade. She had always been the possessor.

Her modus operandi was simple: she always satisfied (she knew every secret pleasure), but carefully and purposefully kept herself unavailable. The fact that she was unattainable kept her desirable.

Tonight was different, though. Different, because of her encounter with an incubus. “Her” incubus—since he made it clear he had claimed her for his own.

“It’s nonsense,” she reasoned with herself.

What was the definition she had read?

***in•cu•bus:*** *An evil spirit supposed to descend upon and have sexual intercourse with women as they sleep.*

*“Women.”*

She noted the plurality of the word.

She was beginning to have a taste of what ordinary mortals went through. She had never hungered after an object of her desire. She had always relied on herself. There wasn’t a soul that matched up to her perfecting standards.

“Damn this shade of red.”

She had slipped into a dress with a high slit up the side of one thigh. The crimson was too dark for her fair skin. It was nonetheless an alluring dress, that made its siren-owner sizzle all the more.

He’d come to her only once so far. He said he dreamed of her while he was away. He said she was flawless, that her body was a “luscious work of Art.”

Such poetic words that went straight to her ego, if not her heart. Oh, she had heard such lines before—though not quite so poetic. She could well recall the chasm of broken hearts she had left behind.

She used sex to get what she wanted. The men couldn't, as sex was what they desired.

Using men. Her legacy.

She read about incubi when she was a young teen. She always had the notion that a demon would fit a depiction society was accustomed to: the pair of horns on the sides of the forehead, maybe hooves instead of human feet. The definitive devil-goat hybrid. Black wings, if the demon was more akin to an Angel of Death.

Her incubus could not have been more different.

She was half awake when she first realized his figure on the bed. On top of her, his gaze fixing her in position. He was the superb complement to her naked body. Both bodies taut and lean, languid, with an underlying assuredness they were masters (one a mistress) at their craft.

He'd left as swiftly as he'd appeared.

"We will meet again," she thought she heard him say.

Would he come, even if she stayed awake? Traditionally, he wouldn't.

But maybe other forces were at work.

She felt her eyelids flicker, as she fought to stay up.

She wanted to know where he'd come from. What he wanted from her. Did he only manifest himself the minute she started to dream?

Questions clouded themselves in a weary haze.

Slowly, she slipped into the darkness, her mind entering its restful state.

Just before he caught her—one strong, familiar arm, around her waist.

*This story is for animal lovers.*

## **Savion**

The red deer stopped uphill on the forest path.

A robin flittered onto a birch tree in front. The stag raised his head, twitched both ears, then stamped his left hoof twice into the sodden, earthen track.

Savion always did that when he was running out of patience. He needed to tune in to the environment better, and he didn't have a moment to lose. It started with the hare he saw that morning. It was almost full-grown, and looked like any other that Savion had come upon—except that it had an injury. There had been a nasty gash on its hind foot, from getting tangled in a scrap of barbed wire. And it was hunting season.

He had seen a hunt once, with the beagles and basset hounds out on full pursuit. It had been a crisp foggy September morning. He had seen the huntsmen coming in their vans and cars, gathering the beagles around them. It was terrible. The calls of the hunting horn were like a resounding death knell over the land. All the animals knew it, but the hares especially so. Savion had never seen them darting bounding and dodging as swiftly as they did then. Keeping up with this hare hadn't been easy. It must be mayhem being chased by packs trained to find the scent line on all sides. The hare wouldn't know what happened, if the dogs did get to it and decided to snuff it.

Savion knew it was dangerous to come. What if a huntsman spotted *him*? What if he ended up being shot at, skinned, gutted, brought home to be roasted on a spit over a fireplace? Set on a table and served as dinner? He knew how roasted venison smelt like—he shuddered just thinking about it. But he couldn't just stay where he was and let this hunt go on either, in a place that he knew well and spent a lot of his time at. He didn't really know *how* he could help, or what he would have to do if he needed to escape and save his life—but

he was young, strong, and could gallop at top speed. He would rely on that.

*Where are you*, Savion thought.

He moved along the forest trail. There was the slightest rustle in the bushes ahead of him. Savion waited. He wanted to be sure that danger wasn't about to get him. From what he'd seen, he didn't trust humans very much. He didn't want to fall into a trap. He brought his head down and scanned the leaves and undergrowth.

*Focus...focus...*

He looked harder. And he saw it!—he could just about make out the hare hiding in the shadows. Savion saw her round gleaming eyes first, then the long ears, folded and flattened against the back of her neck. She was tensed up and cowering into the ground. Her fur coat was matted with dirt mud and bits of dry grass. Fear filled her wide eyes to the outer rim.

“Hello,” Savion spoke in a soft tone. It would have sounded like a subdued, ordinary and not-too-polite grunt, only to a human.

The hare was still breathing fast from the rapid running, but Savion could see her losing a little of the terror in her eyes, with him at least.

The smell of blood reached him. He remembered the wound on the hare's hind foot.

“Are you...all right?”

The hare still had not taken her gaze off Savion, not even once. She gave a short nod of her head, as if any more movement would cause the hounds and hunters to spring up from all round.

It was quiet; the air was so still. There was a distant firing of a gunshot. The deer and hare couldn't tell whether or not the shot had met its target. They didn't want to know.

Savion was starting to worry.

“Can you move?”

He didn't know what to ask, or what else he could do.

The hare twitched her nose and whiskers.

“A little,” she said in a shy voice.

Savion could not help but feel a sudden pang then, of a



cold cruel sadness. It seemed to him as if he'd thought he could have changed the world with his presence.

He remembered a friend of his, a black stallion that lived on a farm on one of the fields open to the hunt. The steed had guffawed and asked him what on earth he thought he could do for the hares during hunting season. "I don't know," Savion had answered. He just found the idea of being hunted horrifying. He made sure to steer from his usual location when it was time for deer hunting. The hunters had not come around the year before though. Could things be changing? Perhaps. It was never the time to give all hope up.

He thought about why he was there...

He had wanted to do all he could today. But he wondered again why he had come. He had spent the last two hours following this hare, and what of it now? What of the remaining days and hares throughout the hunt?

"Is there anything I can do?"

The hare looked down the forest trail, to the dry withered field beyond which she had crossed, dragging sore foot and all.

"I'd ask you to just stay here," she said. A shiver ran through her, once. "But they're coming."

Savion brought his head to the direction—he hadn't been on the alert again. They were indeed coming. He hadn't been paying attention as he was thinking through his reasons for being there. He had an idea.

"Up ahead," he said to the hare, "is a stream. Go through it, the hounds will lose your scent."

He hoped that she would be able to make the distance. It wasn't very far ahead. He was backing up, hoping he wouldn't be seen. Not yet. He had a hunch that what he wanted to do would work.

"I'll go down there, now. You make your way to the stream and I will meet you there, later."

"Don't..." the hare said. "Please..." But her instinct was getting her ready to leave her spot.

Savion reared his head up with pride. He could feel the weight of the antlers on his head. They gave him a regality he hadn't known as a fawn. He had to go now; it would be any

time before the dogs picked out the hare's scent in the forest.

Savion headed down the forest path, back where he had come from. He'd distract the hounds. He gained more sureness and his heartbeat quickened with each step. The hare took off, oblivious to the shooting pain in her leg. She was getting away while she still could.

The red deer knew what to do. He didn't panic. He plodded noisily and heavily along the path, to get the attention of the basset hounds that had been out and about for quite a long time. They noticed him right away. In fact, as he got closer to them, he could see the sad, tired look that flooded their own brown eyes. Savion wondered if the look was there from the time they were young pups. There were seven of them. They looked up at Savion, keeping a few feet away from him as he towered above them.

He was counting on being an impressive sight for the huntsman.

The hunter had a gun in his hands, and he brought it down as he saw Savion approach. He was young too. He was broad-shouldered, and stood straight and tall. His freckled, reddish face and sandy brown hair gave him a friendly disposition. He looked warm and comfortably dressed in a dark green tweed coat, boots, and black cap.

Savion wanted to go just near enough, while keeping his distance so that the huntsman couldn't touch him. It was rare to have a wild red stag come up close, with neither side mistrusting every move and breath of the other's. The man couldn't do anything anyway, apart from send a bullet into him, but Savion doubted that the huntsman would do that. Savion only had to rear up and send his front hooves smashing into the man's chest or spine. He had no plans on doing that either. He would only bring trouble for all the other deer in the area.

He managed to get his way with the hounds too.

"Greetings," he'd said to them, with a formal bow of his head. They had taken an immediate liking to him, and ambled along the ground next to him, docile. With them, Savion paced round the huntsman, stopping to explore the grass and dried out pieces of shrubbery on the field from

time to time.

*I hope she made it, I hope she made it*, Savion thought of the hare.

The huntsman placed a hand on his hip, the one that wasn't holding the gun. He squinted in the daylight, even in the shade provided by the flap of his cap, to gaze at the red beauty. He looked around in the distance—searching for the elusive hare perhaps, or for any other deer that could be around. From the way he remained still and the way he was looking on him, Savion knew it was the man's first time being so near a wild stag before. He wondered how it must feel like for the hunter. The first time Savion had witnessed a human was during the first hare hunting season. It had been a stocky man with a grey moustache and a barrel for a paunch. He had heard the man chortle when the hounds ripped apart the first hare they had drawn. After that, he didn't go near people as much as he could help it, apart from children and women when they were alone. They tended to be gentler.

The young hunter decided to sit down—a good sign. A breeze was stirring the air and the little bits of vegetation in the field. He took his cap off, still looking at the red deer. Two of the dogs went up to the man; he stroked them behind the ears as they circled round him. The man had a calm air about him. He hadn't frowned or furrowed his brows apart from squinting in the sun. The expression on the man's face never changed, but Savion could feel the man forgetting about the hunt for a moment, forgetting why he was out there at midday in the open field. Savion was even considering keeping this up a little more than he intended. He wouldn't have minded staying, if he were sure he wouldn't be harmed or gained control of.

He sensed something then. Another pack was approaching. He knew from the way the basset hounds started to walk down the field, circling back to the huntsman still, but something else had piqued their interest. He could hear the sounds of the new pack coming too. It was time to go.

Savion wanted to leave the hunter with a sense of

wonderment, the awe which took hold of a person deep within. He'd done it a few times and seen its effect. This time would be no exception. Savion humbly went up to the huntsman, and slowly lowered his chin upon the man's shoulder. He was careful not to get his antlers in the way. It did something to people; it melted away all sense of detachment and mindless superiority. Savion's duty was done.

Savion turned and broke off in full speed towards and into the forest again, his red coat a glistening blaze in the background.

There was a distant rumbling roll of thunder then. If it rained, the hunt would have to come to a halt. It was bad for chasing game and following scent lines.

\*

The look in the hare's eyes when he got to the stream was all Savion needed.

He'd see what he could do the next day.

\*

The young hunter didn't go out to hunt the following morning.

*I believe I was inspired by Vivaldi's 4 Seasons, and Japanese art.*

## **4 Seasons**

### *Spring:*

There were tears, and a tearing of flowers that blossomed in the rain.

We thought the risk it took to bloom, would be more painful than remaining tight inside the bud. We exulted at having been proven wrong. We both believed what we shared would last a millennium.

I would lie on the field watching you dance, paint, sing, before finding ourselves in a chaotic frenzy, that fed and sustained us. You made the cold nights shorter; I thought my home would have no need for a fireplace, ever again.

As I watched you go, I thought of the first sweet night we became lovers. "I'll soon be back," you promised.

### *Summer:*

You said you had found a special place where no one would see us. By the passages of dreams, I visited you in secret, as you slept. Even the shadows could not betray us there.

I spent night after night with you, dreading the final hour before daybreak, wishing the sun would forget to rise. Once, all we did was lie side by side for hours on end, listening to our hearts, that were once complete strangers.

Each morning, when I looked at my untidy hair in the mirror, I decided to leave it as you last saw it. I did not care if the whole world knew about us.

### *Autumn:*

I saw you dancing beneath a tree, that drenched you with light pink petals in April. It was the place which sanctioned our first night together.

You weren't alone. You said to the lover whose arms held you, that you'd always be there. You spoke the same words to me less than a harvest moon ago.

"We have our duties to fulfill." Your note was with me at all times.

At low tide, I drew a heart in the sand, with driftwood we had carved our names into. The waves and seagulls that crowded the shore seemed to mock me, but I refused to listen.

*Winter:*

I always thought I'd drown in your love, until I came face-to-face with an impregnable layer of ice.

Confusion. My thoughts are lost in them, but not my heart.

I wonder why I never said anything to you. I thought my displays of blushes and kisses were obvious. You said you are going away to be his wife; I said I want to go away too, to make my own destiny, and I'd like you to be part of the journey, which is the part I forgot to say. Curse these words that I can never find, when I need them the most.

I decide to go by your window, call your name, seduce you all over again, and we can steal into the dark together.

By the time I do, a whole year has gone by—along with you.

*A short, fun-to-write speculative fiction piece.*

## **Evolution**

[.01]

Jul 14, 2040

[snapshot of average household]

“Stand up when you’re told to,” Mom snapped. Junior had been glued to his seat for more than twenty-six hours straight.

Junior protested—“But I am!”

“Don’t be ridiculous.”

Mom went over and tried to pry the ten-year-old off the chair. Her efforts, were futile.

The 99.99%-nude girls continued shaking their booties on the computer screen.

They, could move.

[.02]

07 14 2070

[LatestOutbreak\_in\_GlobalEpidemic ©  
WorldDigitalSyndicateNetwork]

Major epidemic reported worldwide.  
Muscle atrophy outbreak.

Associated with extended-extended use of computers.  
 Other digital, technical, devices inc.  
 Latest outbreak comes 30 years post groundbreaking study:  
 081450\_ChildrenLoseUseOfLegs\_01570209.

Leading scientists not worried.

1) “We are 10 steps closer to developing materials that will render physical degeneration non-existent.”—Noted Bioscientist Dr. John Scull, Nanomaterials Institute

2) “The discovery offers a new way to look at the links between genes, behavior, and neural function.”—Dr. X Doe, Chairman of WorldUni Biosciences’ Education Research Group

[.03]

07<sup>2</sup> 2120

[Official Announcement © WDSN Dvlpmnt Blog 3.8.1]

Evolutn of human species 1 step ^.

Zero nd 4 limbs. Bane o.exstnce, limbs! Limbs tt u had 2 ke<sup>2</sup>p moving, 2 prevnt joints 4rm frzing ^. Creakng joints wr frequent along w muscle atrophy, due 2 lack o.impertve ne<sup>2</sup>d o.hving joints+limbs in 1st place.

Internet = all 1 nds. Mouse+keybrd phased out humns undergo latest neural-cortex Microchip Update 1.7.1 instal<sup>2</sup>atn. Upgrade ≠ mandatory, √ highly recom<sup>2</sup>ended, 2 fix bugs+security iss in prev vers. 1.7.0, released 86400.41.26.51 s ago, by Mr. DX26.78.9 on his w.site. Enhances MU 1.0.0 tt al<sup>2</sup>ws humn brain 2 cntrl mvments onsc<sup>2</sup>n via brain pwr alone.

-Limbs! 2day, we celebrate we<sup>2</sup>k 29’s milestone highlight o.humn progres<sup>2</sup>, o.the prjcted nu-humn being evolving 2



ke<sup>2</sup>ping just brain, and 1's head in glass canister o.SuperSalt (® Dr. WQ1.51.61.2).

Rmber \*23:59:59:59pm\*: 2 com<sup>2</sup>emrte latest milestone in Human Evolutn 1-2-3.

1: <begin<sup>2</sup>ng w a virtual toast to we<sup>2</sup>k 29's excel<sup>2</sup>nt scientific achivmnts! 4 full list o.VParty Celebratn Venues+Exclusive VParty Celebratn Venues, signn @http://208.179.31.37.92.34.0.com>

2: <we also com<sup>2</sup>emrte extinctn of last Class Insecta on planet. all animals hv died out—it is th(us)<sup>2</sup> humans tt hv provn 2 b big<sup>2</sup>nest win<sup>2</sup>ers in “survival of the fittest” (™ CR Darwin, “IV. Ntrl Selectn; or Survival o.the Fittest”, in CW Eliot, Origin o.Species)>

3: <Simulate endorphin-saturation in ur microchip. FREE trial offerx>

[x]: <<Expires: 172800.00.00.00 s. Upgrade 2 PRO 4 only \$30/s! Bill paying problems, contact Cyborg Mi\$y @ Financial Aid Office, 2 arrange Alternative Forms o.Payment <Sponsored Link: Paid Research Study—Volunteers Needed for Medical Research Clinics Earn \$750-\$1500 per Day, more info @http://.427.190.41.65.31.28.7.org>>>

Porcelain *was first written in 2003 when I was 17.*

*This one's pretty idiosyncratic. It was the first piece where I felt truly free in "bending the rules" of proper English.*

## Porcelain

she has good skin. BAD hair. but lovely porcelain skin.

*/snip/goodbye split-ends/*

"You still schooling?" I ask.

"Yeah."

she replies with a smile, as she nods her head up and down.

*/snip, snip/*

"I'm in a media course."

*media!* : the saturated culture of plastic realities the massacre of self-identities induced by moguls slugging leading the specimens caught by the web in the frenzy for glitz glamor cash

"I don't really like it though."

*/snip/oh/*

"Oh."

her curls are driving a blitz of pinpricks into my skin I feel it down my neck and spine. how does it flow where's the layer that'd just been sectioned off and above all the dryness the volume of thick frizzy wild mad HAIR what am I supposed to

“How about you?”

/bring the sides of the hair together, same length? check/

/asking about you/

/She’s Asking About You/

“Me?”

she actually looks genuinely interested. why would she be what reason would she have for wanting to know me better? she's just there getting a haircut and I'm just a guy completing a trainee course which will be over in 2 weeks

“Before this?”

an extension to her question.

/bit more and then a trim to the fringe, and texturizing/

before this was school, school, work, school. the places, companies, the mention

/Life’saBitch!/and I can smell my CK One I wonder if she can as well?/

“I was an insurance agent.”

/guess it wasn't/

“Oh!”

her eyes light up in surprise.

/snip/snip/yeah what d’you wanna do about it/time’s been wasted/money/

I look at myself in the mirror for a moment. bring a flat strand of my newly dyed pink and spiked hair back up into place. briefly check out how I look

/cool cool all's cool/down to the One Star Pro Suedes black collage jeans wristband snapbands vintage red-heart tattoo on inner right arm/

“I, couldn’t do something like that.”

she looks a little relieved almost, as if exclaiming “Oh!” was an answer buzzed Incorrect like on a television game show.

*/snip/snip/snip/done/insurance policies.../*

/she’s still young/am I supposed to reply or ask her something?/maybe ‘career advice’/she’s still young/

“Yeah, you’re still young.”

/oh god and now I've got to style the HAIR/

/bottle of straightening balm, water-spray, serum/

I glance at other clients at the academy. getting a cut, blow and dry for eight bucks by students of this 8-month hairstyling course. many clients are girls, students themselves. they come with their friends, chat about hairstyles for a while, then move on to gossip shopping celebrity trivia. my model she's alone here alone hasn't checked her cellphone once or asked for a drink or magazine to read

I blow-dry her hair while straightening with a paddle brush.

then apply on some straightening balm.

and return to blow-drying the hair again.

I repeat this process for the next hour or so. she jerks her head when the metal tips of the brush come into contact with the tips of her ears twice. I must be burning her hair at the rate I'm going, but styling this type of hair straight requires high heat.

\*

the director comes around to inspect the cut and style.

/over...it's over.../

“Not too bad.”

he ruffles up her hair. her hair could pass off as having been relaxed now, like the hair many other girls her age have, or would like to have.

/feels her hair/inspects cuticles with that expertise way of his/

director smiles.

“I think you look better with straight hair.”

and I think she does too. she has nice features, great skin, not too bad a body she looks better this way

“Yeah.”

she hasn't said anything since the hair-dryer was on.

she messes her hair a little bit more, and smiles in agreement.

she seems to be nice...and a little different from other girls. for one thing, most girls in her shoes would have already chemically straightened and treated their hair forking out the time money money time on a regular basis sitting there to get

board-straight flat easy-to-manage \*in actuality, fake\* hair

“Thank you.”

she smiles again and reaches down to get her bag.

I am dead tired, I wonder how many future clients I meet will have such tough rough frizzy hair to handle. this is a first for me, a challenge no doubt, but I did it in

/time:5pm?/ Five!DAMN/was told to end at 3:30/she's just about to get up and leave her cut's done

“Sorry, I took so long.” I look down a little bit, and half smile to myself. I'd overshoot by quite some minutes.

/and she'll go “it's okay” flash her pearly-whites and walk out to continue her day in the life of a teenage girl-woman up to god-knows-what/

She smiles

/her complexion is near flawless/

“It's Okay.”

/SheIsDifferent/the tone?/the way she says it?/it's not socially polite/what is it, genuine? heartfelt? do I/

she's gone to pay at the cashier, and I'm already being shown to the next client that I have to tend to.

one moment I'm looking at the new client's hair, the next at the one paying. the one with the porcelain skin.

New Client

/normal, y'know, fully made-up and everything/straight bone-straight hair/easy/worlds different from/natural?

shiny, sleek, variation upon variation of jennifer aniston's hair/easy to cut/

and when I turn, the girl who was paying has left.

she's standing outside, looking up at the sky as it rains, she's

/wondering if she should go or not/does she have an umbrella/

“Hi, when was your last haircut?”

before I could say goodbye to the girl outside

/a thank you for her patience/would she be coming back again/what does she like to do/

or ask what her name was.

---

## **POEMS / PROSE POEMS**

### **The Boy at The Train Station**

I only saw him for two fifths of a second.  
I wish I had for longer.

He was seated on the floor, against a wall.  
Nobody saw him.

He remained unseen as commuters streamed out.  
People were rushing, talking on their cell phones,  
laughing with their friends and colleagues.

Station officers.  
Students in uniform.  
Business people with their laptops.  
Fashionistas in their heels and make-up.  
No one looked sideways or turned their heads for  
a backward glance.

He wore a baseball cap back to front.  
An oversized black T-shirt, battered Vans sneakers.  
His fringe had streaks of faded red.

His head was bowed low; his arms circled round his  
propped up knees. He was alone, he was quiet, and he  
was crying.

Boys cry, but it's not often that I actually see them do.

He seemed oblivious to the crowd, to the endless  
stream of people stepping and moving out of the train  
station. He could have been there for hours, or he  
could have just gotten there.



I wanted to ask if he was all right. I wanted to go up to him and ask, “Do you need any help?”

I had the time; I could listen.  
I might not be able to fix the matter (or matters)  
down to the last detail,  
but I knew how important it was to simply  
have someone,  
be there.

Like the rest of the human traffic, I didn’t stop.  
I made a turn to go up the escalator,  
to the world of more traffic and people,  
outside.

I moved on without ever letting him know that

I had  
seen him.  
That I did care.  
That if I could make a difference,  
I would have been happy to do so.

But I’ll never know.

\* \* \*

## **Slates of Grey**

Sullen faces like slates of grey—  
What I’d seen on a walk today.

Bodies rushing bodies bolting  
Time for life a disregarding.

Money to make and to grow old  
What about the hands to hold?

Deadlines, projects, people to meet

What about our own two feet.

Sullen faces like slates of grey...  
What I'd see most anyday.

\* \* \*

## **Skating to a Halt**

Speed was not enough as I  
Relished the mobility  
The agility  
The flexibility  
Racing with the wind  
The songs in my mind a din  
Even time had lost its essence  
I blocked out everything besides the sun  
I got to the road  
I saw something fast  
A full spin  
Complete stop  
Loud screech  
Glares:  
Similar indifference  
Cabbie went off  
I went off  
Lightning reflexes  
I believe in angels now  
Had we been a second slower  
I would be hit, dying  
Maybe  
Lying in a coma.

*~ 6 June 2002 / while rollerblading*

\* \* \*

## **Slow Acidifying**

Bone by bone  
 Still no  
 will to  
 moan  
 groan  
 hollow  
 sallow  
 a  
 break down  
 of  
 marrow  
 weak  
 sick  
 lying  
 denying  
 dragging the  
 feet  
 wanting  
 s l e e p .

*~ 2003, about eating disorders*

\* \* \*

## **All People**

People  
 Hate too much  
 Hurt too much  
 Cuss too much  
 Fornicate too much  
 Don't they know that too much kills?  
 Sex is  
 So blended in  
 With music and magazines  
 I've never even blinked my eyes  
 To think of where to draw my lines.  
 God's gifts...

Parcelled and re-sold  
By media and entertainment scenes  
A plastered vortex of colours and dreams  
All inductions of vivid illustrations  
Fallacious and  
Plastic as a credit card is  
Yet all people do is  
Lap up more  
And wonder why their life's so messed  
While all I do  
Is get depressed  
For all the people who  
Don't care less.

\* \* \*

## **Pretty in Plastic**

Oh, look here  
I'm so beautiful  
I've multi-colored hair  
That's board straight  
That bounces the light  
Off the back of my head  
I don't wear glasses anymore!  
What'll be today?  
The windows to my soul  
Blue or violet? Green or gray?  
I love new clothes  
I spend as I should  
I love being me  
Life's never been this good –  
I Love My Life!  
(my life of looking good.)

\* \* \*

**paperchase.06**

PSLE

(Primary School Leaving Examination)

(Six years)

'O' and 'A'-Level certs

(Six years)

A university degree

Masters

Honors

(Six years)

When what I like to do

Is read, write, draw

Things I last did

When

I

Was

Six.

*~ 2004. I grew up in Singapore; "Primary School" =  
"Elementary School"*

\* \* \*

## **Your Best Face (And Body) Forward**

Coblation

(electro-surgical skin resurfacing)

Blepharoplasty

(double eyelid Surgery)

Rhinoplasty

(nose job)

Augmentation Mammoplasty

(breast augmentation)

Malarplasty

(cheek augmentation)

and

Teeth Whitening

That will be:

\$42,900

for:  
better skin  
bigger eyes  
a sharper nose  
bigger breasts  
fuller cheeks  
a brighter smile.

for:  
a  
Better  
Body.

for:  
Self  
Confidence.

\* \* \*

## **Effects of A “New, Fast, and Easy Solution”**

Blood on my hands  
Never felt your precious little feet  
Haunted in the brain  
Repeated nightmares driving me insane  
Torn in the heart  
Never felt this emptiness within  
Blood is on my soul  
For dumping a life so new and whole.

*~ 20 Nov 2001, on abortion*

\* \* \*

## **Storm**

Terrible, destructive hurricane,

Fun and laughter fade away  
When you come along.

Loud, deafening thunder,  
You scare the little children  
When you roar and rumble.

Strong, howling wind,  
The people hide from you  
As you make them cold.

Horrible, terrifying storm,  
Terror fills the world  
When you come along.

*~ 1996 / one of my early poems / 10 years old.*

\* \* \*

## **I Look**

I Look:  
Birds moving restlessly  
On tree branches  
Ruffling up their feathers.

I feel:  
The Sun's heat  
Disappearing, a  
Gale of cold wind blows.

I listen:  
The frantic flapping of  
Ravens' wings, the sky  
Filled with their cries.

I look again:  
Birds quickly flying away,  
Trees swaying in the wind,

Dark clouds gathering.

I feel again:  
A second gale of cold  
Wind, I shiver despite  
The heat of the burning fire.

I listen again:  
The leaves rustling in  
The wind, a distant roll  
Of thunder.

A raven's cry,  
An owl's hoot,  
A wolf's howl,  
Lightning flashing,  
Lightning dancing,  
A deafening roll of thunder...  
Then, pours the  
Rain.

\* \* \*

## **Touch Poems**

Sweet is the honey in the honey jar,  
sugar and butter spread over bread,  
caramel and toffees,  
savoring melted chocolate.

Sticky is stepping on jam on the floor,  
bubble gum all stuck to my face,  
licking chewy chocolate with ice-cream,  
tramping through mud in the field.

\* \* \*

## **Death of a Lion King**



A hot, humid wind blows across the Savannah,  
A million thorns pierce each gaping wound.

The king, once mighty, full of strength and vitality,  
Now staggers away, wounded and defeated.

The young prince does not hesitate:  
He proceeds to maul the pride of cubs.

Wails of the queen reach the gaunt and powerless king,  
Who cries a roar of woe that echoes far and wide.

He lifts his head and mane, squints at the sun,  
As the crunching of his flesh and blood pounds with no end.

The king collapses to the ground, in the merciful shade of a tree,  
And succumbs to the very circle of life.

Flies swarm around his body, buzzards appear above,  
He pants heavily, his vision blurs.

Suddenly they swoop down, and he meets his fate:  
The death of a lion king.

*~ 2000, 13+ years old.*

\* \* \*

*I own the website, [www.dragonsinn.net](http://www.dragonsinn.net)—the following poems are in tribute to The Dragon (a symbol of excellence, and so much more).*

## **Red Dragon**

Hue of life's blood; the  
Passion and fury beneath  
Like molten lava.

---

\* \* \*

## **Ravenous Appetite**

A dragon, unfed,  
Thrashing about in a rot  
Iron cage. Unleashed.

\* \* \*

## **The Tattooed Girl**

Kimono slipping  
off her white shoulders to bare  
her dragon backpiece.

\* \* \*

## **Guardians**

There was once a time when  
They ruled our Earth  
All the land was owned by them  
The mighty beasts of Dragons.

Rulers of the seas and oceans  
Kings of the Sky and Sun;  
Queens of the Stars and Moon  
They were the Guardians of the Earth.

Then came Man  
Demanding and commanding  
Driving them from all their dwellings  
Into dark caverns to lie in.

The Dragons took flight as freedom was theirs  
Where to, no one knows—but

Don't the Sun and Moon still rise?  
 Don't the waves still wash upon the shore?

If they had left our Earth for good  
 There'd be no sunlight  
 There'd be no rain:  
 Nothing would live again.

Until the day they decide to wake  
 To leave all Earth in the hands of  
 Man, always will the Dragons be  
 The Guardians of The Earth.

*~ 1999 / first decent dragon poem / 12+ years old.*

\* \* \*

## **Dragons of Ice**

The Moon becomes a  
 Silver sphere,  
 reflections in the water:  
 just as clear.

It's snowing...  
 but time is  
 Frozen

Winds are howling

but silence rests  
 Unbroken.

A sudden  
 Surge revives;  
 its vibes know boundless  
 Power.

A solitary stare: he

Knows you're there.  
 Stances are fixated  
 Yet souls intently move.  
 Affirmation  
 and honour is yours thereafter—  
 The dragon beckons:  
  
 The kinship is awoken.

\* \* \*

### **Sleeping Dragon**

To an eyeless mind -  
 a pile of dusty bones  
 To human carrion  
 a rotting carcass  
 A figure cast in stone  
 to desensitized bodies  
 A whimsical relic  
 to lost, wearied souls.  
 Lying undisturbed -  
 as peoples toss and turn  
 Soundly in wait  
 as cities crumble  
 The dragon sleeps  
 while worlds wage war  
 And awakes refreshed  
 when strife and pestilence  
  
 are no more.

\* \* \*

### **Autumn**

Red and golden leaves  
 Swirl, caught in a dance as the

Dragon unfurls. An  
essence of light and candor,  
unbound by earthen  
ashes as he rises to  
the topmost branches  
before he leaves and  
all the trees will be  
but  
bare.

\* \* \*

## **Death Dragoness**

Let her come to you...  
The end is naught  
But the real beginning  
resist  
and your soul will know  
Unrest  
let her find you  
and you both will soar  
beyond the deepest nights  
beyond unconquered depths.  
She's pain and joy  
intertwined  
tears and dreams  
personified  
She's never spoken  
and yet you've known her—  
who can understand  
the meaning of her being?  
Whosoever unlocks the  
mystery  
has sealed the fate of  
forbidden  
certainty  
hence  
proceed

and fly away!  
 Your heart's yearnings  
 to be fulfilled;  
 Your spirit's cries  
 to rest in sanctity.

\* \* \*

*Piety was inspired by a painting of a knight kneeling before  
 a green dragon.*

## **Piety**

The prince was deep in the heart of the endless forest.  
 He knew the dragon was near.  
 “She glows like a green crystal,” the town's magi told him.  
 “Get her before she gets you.”  
 The prince was ready with his quiver of deadly, mercurial  
 arrows.  
 Mercury meant instant death to a forest dragon.  
 He couldn't waste a single arrow—  
 and then he realized  
 that the forest had gone deadly quiet  
 and even the air was still with the chill of Death.  
 A warmth on the back of his neck  
 and there she was  
 with clear amber eyes  
 her whole body glowing:  
 the spirit and lifeblood of the forest itself.  
 The prince could release the arrow  
 straight into her eye  
 But Why?  
 And she toyed with his conscience  
 testing simultaneously, her own patience  
 The prince relented  
 Threw his bow and arrows upon the ground  
 Side by side  
 They were safe and sound

The townspeople took the prince for dead  
 When he never returned with the dragon's head  
 When with her, he stayed  
 She thought he'd be too afraid  
  
 But he loved her too much instead.

\* \* \*

## **Avalon**

Avalon, land of  
 Magic and Enchantment.  
 All sorts of wizardry dominate this  
 World.

Avalon, land of  
 Stories and Legends  
 Where the greatest King of Britain  
 Sleeps.

Avalon, land of  
 Secrecy and Mystery  
 Where the souls of the Great  
 Rest.

Avalon, land of  
 Peace and Justice  
 Where only the pure mortal can hope to  
 Go.

\* \* \*

## **4 Fib Poems**

*P.S. The typical fib is a six line, 20 syllable poem.*

It's Genetics

Yes,  
I  
Married  
A martian,  
So my offspring do  
Have large heads and one eye only.

Déjà vu

I  
Was  
Here in  
The future,  
When my clone and I  
Decided to live years ahead.

Energy Conservation

The  
Wise  
Dragon  
Sleeps beneath  
The sea, waiting for  
Homo sapiens to self-destruct.

Death, Please End My Misery

Whose  
Soul  
Should I  
Steal tonight?  
I hear so many  
Voices imploring my mercy.

\* \* \*

**Grotto**

I watch you pray  
From my seat at the pew



You look so focused  
and at peace  
That should be the  
way at least.  
Hymn, hymns  
Sermon, sermons  
Preaching,  
Conditioning,  
I'd rather be there with you  
2 minutes  
equivalent to 52 sit-ins  
at Church  
out of  
routine  
repetition.

\* \* \*

## **Drowning**

We feel dry  
Old  
Faded  
Yellow  
We're blades of grass  
Not stalks of wheat  
We've been fizzled to a crisp  
While all our dreams are a mist  
Blue skies  
Clear days  
Hasn't it all dragged to a haze?

The air is heavy  
None of us already  
Sudden bolts of thunder  
Sudden bolts of lightning  
And as we rejoice, as we sing  
We're suddenly drowning  
In the very thing we

Prayed for  
Hoped for  
Wished for  
Asked for.

*~ 15 March 2002*

\* \* \*

## **Disillusioned...Misguided**

Disillusioned...  
Sinking in a world of  
Nothingness  
Deep in thought  
Meditation  
If there's a place called  
Nowhere  
It must be  
Somewhere  
If we're heading there  
Help can't find me...  
I'm withdrawing from the world  
Living on my own knowing  
No man is an island  
Time waits for no one...  
We still dwell on our lives  
Our words our actions  
Where's the point in all that?  
Too still to be lost  
Too dead to be alive  
If I'm staring into truth and  
Staring into nothingness  
Then isn't that what truth is about  
Or am I just being  
Misguided.

*~ Mid-2002, felt this was the first 'real' poem I'd written*

\* \* \*

**.:Trouble:.**

When purpose precedes passion  
 Fashion; dignity  
 Reason; intuition  
 Religion;  
 faith.

When fame succeeds Art  
 Love; a random fling  
 Social networking; personal connectivity  
 Philosophy;  
 Truth's axiom.

\* \* \*

**-quote me-**

kiss the air  
 and kiss me goodbye

yes this is what i have  
 an air guitar riff  
 a random symphony in my head

the only relationship  
 that really stands  
 is that between my piano and i

the beauty of one's self  
 charred by the cruelty of  
 the concurrent world

these random quotes are just a  
 fixation of my imagination  
 a brief spasm of unprecedented freedom  
 a fleeting moment of pure truth in being.

\* \* \*

## **I Think I'm Idealistic**

While everyone hates and the whole world cries  
 I'm somehow on top and sailing through the sky  
 Somehow composed, seemingly impassive  
 Always reflective, forever pensive

Not understood, neither misunderstood  
 Not a leader, neither another follower  
 New days bring strife but I seem to have a knack:  
 I only see white, what happened to the black?  
 I don't know the bad in people  
 I've always something good to say  
 Jealousy, anger...almost alien to me  
 Doesn't seem true but patent is reality

While everyone hates and the whole world cries  
 I'm somehow on top and sailing through the sky  
 It seems too good, too good to be true  
 My sky's always blue, I wonder what to do.

*~ 12 May 2002*

\* \* \*

## **Haiku Humor / out Of control**

### **Haiku Humor**

#### **1. 69**

If only we could  
 Sixty-nine, but alas! I  
 Am a head too short.

#### **2. Guardian Angel**

I look away for  
Two seconds and you manage  
To break your backbone.

### **3. Get Away From Me**

"I'm Seductive", she  
Thinks—while the guy shrinks in fear  
from her Advances.

### **4. The Obese Fly**

Ate too much, couldn't  
Fly high—fell into the soup  
To splutter and die.

### **5. The Man Who Spat**

Ended up choking  
On his own spit—think before  
Spitting in public.

### **out Of control**

when you want so much and are just doing your best when  
you see things there that no one else does when you keep  
tripping or banging into walls but keep on going because you  
**know** it's worth it people say it's the journey that matters  
but of course the destination does too or what's the point  
when you're too real for anyone to comprehend when you're  
passionate to the point of self-indulgent excess when a bar of  
music speaks more than a day's worth of human  
conversation when all of life is focused on a single point that  
is

\* \* \*

### **:: Oxygen ::**

Too much  
can kill you  
But I'd rather  
that be the

cause of  
 my death  
 than  
 to lie  
 passive  
 in a  
 perennial slumber  
 that appears  
 to Society  
 as  
 Apathy; my  
 way of  
 Survival,  
 a bolster  
 against  
 Asphyxiation.

\* \* \*

## **Christmas List**

I want to live on the moon  
 Hold life in a spoon  
 Gaze at stars all night  
 And know I could be just as bright  
 I want to sing a song of love  
 Have a glimpse at what's above  
 Be one with the world (and all its souls)  
 To know the wonder it really holds  
 Wish pain away  
 So skies won't be grey  
 And know I'd die,  
 Dreamily passing by.

~ 21 Dec 2002

\* \* \*

**/Not the Only One/**

I'm not the only one  
Drifting in a neverending haze  
Living through days in a daze  
Just trying to look for you  
The perfect friend  
The perfect date  
The ideal mate  
The idealist  
Maybe I try too hard  
Maybe I want too much  
Maybe life is short and  
Maybe I'll enjoy it as such  
But until I leave this world  
I'll never stop looking or waiting for you  
If you're my soulmate  
My significant other  
I'll know it when I look into your eyes  
Whoever you are  
And you'll know it too.

*~ 29 Jan 2002, 15 years old*

\* \* \*

## **Light & Dark**

[light]

Raindrops on  
My room window  
I think of  
You  
And to the night  
I wonder  
If you're thinking  
Of me  
Too?

[dark]

Raindrops against  
My room window  
I think of  
You  
And wonder  
If you think of me too  
Or if  
You're spending the night  
With  
Your TV set.

\* \* \*

## **Smile**

Looking at you  
And I  
Finally  
Pluck up enough  
Courage to  
Flash  
My over-practiced  
Picture-perfect  
Smile  
Yet all I  
Get is  
A  
Turn to your  
Side with  
No  
Miraculous story to  
Tell the  
World  
And suddenly I  
Realize how  
I  
Made you feel



After all  
This  
Time.

*~ 2001, staring out a hospital window*

\* \* \*

### **-tears from the stars-**

stars shine,  
they are so bright  
each one for us ignites  
hence when they cry  
it is  
a  
melancholic sight.

the essence of tears  
unmasks sorrow  
the cleansing is purity  
pure divinity.

each of us a star in the night  
alone in the darkness  
yet together undivided;  
and as tears fall the  
earth does glisten  
shining,  
even twinkling.

like stars.

\* \* \*

### **-of love & lovers-**

Lovers  
(You and I)

Your gaze is a transfixion  
that renders me powerless  
makes me feel  
uncovered  
but warm, safe  
secure.

One touch speaks more  
than a season of words  
a kiss  
and life's agonies  
are faded.

The night is still  
We're hand in hand  
under the moonlight  
and it's times like this  
heaven reigns on earth  
powers flow between us  
and magic lives within us  
Trouble seems to ebb away  
while chasms of dreams unlock:  
all in the name  
of  
Love.

\* \* \*

## **I fell in love with a nobody**

thinking that I wouldn't  
and never would  
what if I become  
a nobody too?

*~ 30 Aug 06, written in 20 seconds. Partly inspired by the  
poetry of Zen monks like Ikkyu and Ryokan*

\* \* \*

## **I think of you & me**

Sharing a kiss  
Of truth & purity  
A kiss that disarms  
Strips beneath  
bare bones  
Shivers of  
ecstasy  
Right through our  
Souls.

\* \* \*

## **This is Free Fall**

Going down  
Down  
DOWN

Is this an abyss?  
Where is daylight?  
An exit?

Can't do much  
Don't want to  
Wish you would descend  
Without me having to.

*~ 2002. A retaliation to love. Enough said.*

\* \* \*

## **black ice**

ran through her  
veins as she  
saw him lock  
lips with another  
she could not

believe she thought  
so well of  
him now he  
was a battered  
suitcase to her  
as she waltzed  
out the door  
leaving a trail  
of invisible ashes  
in her wake  
she'd burned the  
memory of him  
he was gone  
he was buried  
he thus ceased  
to even exist

\* \* \*

## **1000**

A thousand kisses  
A thousand apologies—  
We aren't meant to be.

*~ 14 Feb 2004*

\* \* \*

## **[peace.]**

here i am  
at the start  
to see if i  
still have a heart  
i think of when  
the day will be  
"i love you too"  
you'll say to me.

\* \* \*

## **[ You Idiot ]**

You wander freely as a cloud  
Similarly lost as  
A child in a crowd

Funny how you seem to want to  
Take me places—it's just  
One of your many faces

Funny how you want something real  
Out of the game you play  
With a female

Making up your mind  
Is something you'll never do  
Til the end of time

I should try to be  
Just like you—then you'd know  
What it is to deal with you, too.

\* \* \*

## **the one**

that started it all  
    brought me to life  
to leave me & my heart  
to bleed in the dust  
side to side  
you're such a cancer  
vanished when i was looking  
for something like you the most  
but you couldn't have known that

could you  
 thought i might've found  
 someone like you again  
 in number.03  
 till he vanished too  
 and i was bittergleefully  
 left on my own  
 and then i heard from you again

you you you.

the one i tore myself apart over.  
 the one i took so long to get over.  
 the one i trusted more than lusted.  
 the one i would serve  
 if you were Lucifer himself  
 the one that brought this out in me  
 the one that all of me  
 Still Wants  
                   for all eternity

\* \* \*

## **Playing the Flute**

I heard she was an expert at playing the jade flute.

Under the moonlight, we undress each other, hastily—eager  
 to engage in a song of Life's greatest pleasure.

All her movements are gentle as cherry blossoms upon the  
 water.

She daintily brings her lips and tongue to my warrior.

The night is soon filled with our music.

She does not allow me to let her go faster. She does not tire.

All the while, my intense delight threatens to engulf me,  
extinguish me.

Every breath threatens to be my last.

When her performance is complete, she kisses me, and falls  
asleep in my arms.

As she gently sleeps, my hands trace her curves, reveling in  
the details.

When she wakes, I notice she holds her hairpin with as much  
care, as my jade stalk.

~ 2008/2009. A textual/visual representation of *Playing the  
Flute is available @*

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS\\_SU0-Jr6Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS_SU0-Jr6Q)

\* \* \*

## **Wired**

i love your online games  
playing hide-and-seek  
with your everchanging screen names  
like i'm some OCD freak

i count the days that you're away  
discuss your storylines on MSN  
i wish i could be there to say  
"let's dance for now, put down your pen"

winter's here and i'll surely perish  
the electric blanket's just stopped working  
upon a trio of stars i wish  
you could be here with some of your loving

then i find a poem you wrote  
which warms me up & wraps me in

i email you a short quick note:  
 “keep those words flowing—please keep writing”

\* \* \*

## **night light**

(i hear) clock on mantelpiece  
 heart \*thump-th-th-th-thump\*  
 your step floorboard creak  
 door swing you're in

(i see) your shadow figure  
 lunging forward throwing covers  
 crystal-white night light you  
 hungry action ready go

(i feel) you me move  
 alive awaken midnight  
 blinded.by Truth Purity  
 blood.on.fire baptized skyhigh

(i taste) glory power you  
 man woman love life  
 egos breaking selves transcending  
 bodies holy communion

(i smell) you me clean  
 dirty fresh wet  
 sweet tongues bathing  
 skin+bones hit by lightning

\* \* \*

## **-whiteout-**

light steps on the ground  
 of a snow  
 white forest



a roaming silence  
wandering...  
wondering...

a little fire  
bright and warm  
a waiting quiet  
wandering...  
wondering...

if they'll see right  
through the  
snow,  
forest,  
light steps,  
Quiet,  
small fire,  
wanderwondering

and be  
nothing  
but  
in  
sync  
through

pure. white heat

\* \* \*

## **God Bless**

I don't know why it means so much  
But now I seem to be in touch  
With what is true and what is gold  
Not what's static or single-fold.

*~ This was actually an end-off to one of my [hoards of] hand-written journal entries.*

---

## **BOOK EXCERPTS**

### **Excerpt from *EyeLeash: A Blog Novel***

*EyeLeash* is my debut, 65,000-word blog/IM novel—a coming-of-age story set in the digital era. It's more raw and 'uncensored' than most mainstream books, but I felt that was what would allow the characters to be believable and relatable.

Summary: *EyeLeash* captures self-discovery in the 2000s, and showcases the colorful, intricate drama in two youths' relentless search for themselves—and what's really in their hearts.

Book Site: <http://eyeleash.wordpress.com>

\* \* \* \* \*

*From: -✕ Jade Ashton™ ✕- (jade@pinkstar.net)*  
*Sent: Sunday, September 17, 2006 8:36:23 PM*  
*To: [novan] (nc-17@hotmail.com)*  
*Subject: for you*  
*Attachment: EyeLeash.doc (1,998KB)*

Hey Novan :) I was thinking abt what you said. Since you asked for it, I'm sending you a copy of my personal blog. I know I said I didn't blog, but I do -- just that it's a private one. So it's very personal. Rants raves and everything else.

I guess you'll learn quite a lot about me, so it's quite a big risk I'm taking. I mean I understand if you never want to speak to me or see my face again after this. But if anything's going to happen, this is what/who I really am...so if I don't

hear from you, I'll know it was a mistake.

I'd just like to request that you respect my privacy and not let anyone else know about this blog of mine. I believe I can trust you with that. All said, attachment is with this e-mail.

xoxo  
Jade.

P.S: I stole your poem's titles for the attachment. Hope you don't mind.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **[JANUARY]**

### **Just-Another-Weblog**

Monday, January 2, 2006—11.11am

OhLook-ImSoLoved.com is evil. I think I have to spend more time with my real-life friendships. Simple as that.

Writing online testimonials and comments for people is stupid.

No one being able to figure out that "you're" is different from "your" is stupid.

Bloggng awful poetry, daily events nobody really cares about, or ceaselessly complaining/rambling on the same old things, is *stupid*.

Now I blog too, but this is a private one. Unsearchable on Google, and password-enabled. So it's just me. I can be as boring and mundane as I like, talk to myself if everyone online has the (Away) or (Busy) sign on, and not worry about stepping on anybody's toes.

Let's see what I'll record here over this year.

### **Live XXX Free**

Thursday, January 5, 2006—12.55am

Lia, Darcy and Ayumi were here earlier. We spent three hours visiting some porn sites with horrific color schemes and cheesy music.

Lia: "We should be going down on each other. *Now.*"

LOL. We haven't (yet). But on Xmas Eve, when we snuck into Climax for our virgin clubbing experience, so many people thought we were a bunch of lesbians coz we looked "sooooo close!"

We were dancing tight circles around each other coz there was no space. *Whatever.* Catholic school girls are either lesbians or little ho's.

For better or worse, I'm not into girls. For now at least. Guess I'll see what happens.

I wonder about all these porn girls...

With dicks up their vaginas, aren't they bound to get pregnant sometime/be crawling with STDs/be stretched loose/get bored of it sometime/have unsightly cracked nipples from having them sucked dry?

They don't even look like they're *\*really\** enjoying the sex too. All of us agreed they couldn't be blamed for that.

Update—2.35am

Well so after I saw all the xxx material, naturally I couldn't sit still.

Once I had the house to myself, I had a great sex workout. Admired my curves and movements in the mirrors. I was happily fantasizing. That I was hooking up with NOVAN of all people, for the night.

We were in this dark back alley. He had sexy razored hair. A white T-shirt, which was wet coz it was raining slightly. It clung to, and outlined his body. He actually looked nice: a little more muscular than his real-life scrawniness.

Oh man, how I'd LOVE to have a fling. I wonder if he'd agree to a fling if I did go ask him.

Why would I ask *him*, hmm...

I wonder if he'd agree.

Probably. He's a guy and we all know the body part guys think with. Ha.

If not immediately, I think I could work him into it.

I feel like calling him out one of these days just to chat, or watch a movie, or just hang out. Been a while since we last talked/met up.

***By the way:*** I think people *\*should\** self-service, and love their own bodies more. It *DOES* serve a very useful function...

## **Tuesday, January 10, 2006**

9.18pm

My arms look nice. Those Pilates and toning exercises (the dips are HELL) for the biceps and triceps in *Gymnut: Obsessed* magazine do work.

Did nails this morning, a midnight blue shimmer. Only the last nail on my right hand looks decent. Which means my nail painting has a success rate of 10%.

Last night as I was lying in bed...I seriously wanted a guy. *Any* guy.

It's fun and great being single. You're self-reliant. It gives a "Girl Power" kinda feeling. You can do anything you want without anyone calling to tell you that you can't, or demanding to know every single detail from clothes worn to location to what you're eating and who you're hanging out with.

But it must be *bliss* to be in love with someone else, and for that someone else to be in love with you. I'm talking about *really* liking someone. Not just a fuzzy feeling in your chest and being "infatuated".

Oh, to find this person. I wonder if there's someone like me out there.

Someone who's not into mindless copulating. Someone who doesn't want a whore of a girlfriend for other onlooking girls to aspire to be like. Someone who'll fall in love with me (and I with the person...).

We'd be so completely obsessed with each other. Each time we got together, we'd probably take things off with one smooth perfect love-making session.

I know I've high standards. But I'm just being honest.

## **Lindsay and Friends need Photoshop**

Friday, January 13, 2006—9.41pm

It was more like “5 grand-aunts” instead of “5 Foxy Babes”. Was chatting with Ayumi. She sent me a link to this funny picture online.

+ayumi+: *this is hilarious*

✕-Jade-✕: what’s that?

+ayumi+:

[www.ohlookimsoved.com/photos/46091420/](http://www.ohlookimsoved.com/photos/46091420/)

+ayumi+: *OM<G*

+ayumi+: *all of them should see my plastic surgeon!*

LOL. I know it’s quite mean, but Lindsay had posted this post-clubbing pic of she and her friends with the 5 Foxy Babes caption.

Their make-up was caked. They looked sweaty. Oily. “*I think I’m sooo beautiful and what didja say your name was gaaiinn?*” kind of dishevelled. UGLY-assed!

Lindsay’s hair in particular was a disaster. In fact her whole look was off. Bright orange lipstick with pine green matte eyeshadow. A sequined (!) purple top with shapeless black box-like skirt. Maybe she applied everything in the dark.

Hmm, I wonder if people would journal if they didn’t blog. I like the privacy of writing in a blog for YOUR OWN EYES only, heh.

Coz I can write stuff like this:

*Lindsay* is...a lame excuse of a human being, with bad taste!

*Jenny* is...a vapid, inane, talentless, insipid, twat of an airhead!

*Novan* is...a nice guy. Who isn’t Mr. Sartorial.

*Lia* is smart and sassy. Certified Cool.

*Ayumi* and *Darcy* are Certified Cool also.

## **Why Not?**

Tuesday, January 17, 2006—10.02pm

On the way to Aimless Mall, I met Lindsay and her friends. She was smoking, offered me a stick but I didn't want any.

Her purple contact lenses scare the hell outta me.

I was looking around at the guys of ToxiCity. They're as vain as females. I counted at least seventeen guys primping—in the dark reflective glass of a bus/train, in the mirrors of shops, in the reflection of their friends' SHADES.

I don't think I'll be having a boyfriend anytime soon. I just don't think it's going to happen.

***Random note: I'm seventeen and single. I've always been single and at the rate I'm going, think I'll always be for the rest of my dismal life.***

Today I had a good shopping trip though. I got a few essentials—one pair of Juicy Couture jeans, couple of tops from MaxStudio, handcrafted stained glass dangling earrings (that match my eyes), a band-tee, MaxFactor Lash Perfection mascara, and LaLicious Sugar Soufflé body scrub (strawberry, mmm). Oh and this round enamel ~~virgin~~ vintage Fossil watch!

Now I'm **not** being hypocritical. I'm **not** 100%-materialistic. 24/7 shopping and brand names are **not** what I live for.

That doesn't mean I wanna be caught on the streets looking fugly or out-of-place.

Looking like a fashionista gets you better customer service.

People smile at you more, treat you better, offer you shelter under their umbrellas when it's raining, and think twice before cutting you off if you're waiting for a cab.

You can sit there looking pretty, if you've nothing intelligent to say coz your mind is off somewhere, and still be treated like royalty, with respect.

So...why not?

### **Why Does My Heart...**

Saturday, January 21, 2006—9.27pm

...Feel depressed. Lousy. Lonely.

I go round in circles. But I'm 17 so piss off to anyone that thinks teenage/young adult life is easy. I'm so lost. I want sex, love, and a guy, that's all mine, but...I get confused.

I tried to make a list, in an effort to de-confuse myself about sex/sexuality.

1) **I Am Straight.** Yup, no lesbian or bi thing for myself (though it seems to be an effect on most of St. Coven's girls, especially if you've been there for more than ten years straight). I think I naturally go for guys more.

2) I **\*would\*** sleep with a guy, if I feel right, if it feels right, if he's the right person.

3) **BUT** (and here's the "but"!)-I am **PETRIFIED** of diseases, and *worst* of all getting **PREGNANT**. To date, no contraception is 100%-effective. I think pregnancy's the worst STD ever. Eighteen years of pain, poverty, and torture. Only to have the cycle repeat again with your offspring. We've all witnessed it. It's the end of your life. So, point #2 above is going to be very, very difficult indeed.

Sighhhh.

For now, I can still satisfy myself. In fact, I think that's better. Guys tend to come too fast, from the little that I know :P.

When I observe people, I always think everyone's had sex.

Sometimes I am so sick about my high-minded view on relationships. I wanna be like everyone else! Argh.

I feel like shit I feel like shit I feel like shit.

### **Bloody PMS**

Wednesday, January 25, 2006—7.22pm

Been feeling like hell...I must eat properly today.

It's illogical women should bleed every month if they have no wish to be pregnant in the first place. There should be this ONE day every year, where you just bleed. Saves the monthly trouble of all this cursed biological rubbish.



My stomach feels ballooned and bloated, my boobs feel so heavy and sore. Times like this, I wish I were male.

You know, if guys had PMS (which I think 80% of females *do* have), I bet every single PMS day would be a holiday.

The fate of a female is simply, being female. UGH.

## [FEBRUARY]

### Wednesday, February 1, 2006

1.07am

I messaged Lia online. She's got the flu, oh dear. Told her to drink lots of water.

Then Novan (ha!) came online and messaged me first. He's in a band now?! ROFL. I bet they sound (or at least *look*) prep-rock. EWWWW!

I saved the chat, coz I should be going for one of the band's gigs later this month and the deets of the gig are somewhere inside. And how come I've never heard of "Sid Vicious" before my GOD. He's a total hottie, with that devilish smirk, punkish hair and trim body.

It's always nice catching up with nice friends :).

~ **Download THIS Messenger Today!** ~

Conversation started on [31 Jan 2006, 11:30PM]

[novan]: *hey hey*

✕Jade✕: helloo

✕Jade✕: haven't seen u online in a while =)

[novan]: *oh yea*

[novan]: *i've been busy with a friend's band, lol*

[novan]: *so how u doin*

✕Jade✕: i'm good. how abt u?

✕Jade✕: and wow cool ur in a band??

[novan]: *been listening to the same song for hours... trying to get the tabs right*

[novan]: *yea!... we're 'the blah blah blahs' (super creatively thought of by myself)*

[novan]: *every band names already being used, yknow*

✧Jade✧: yeah, u should rest. ooh what's the song!

✧Jade✧: what instrument do u play too?

[novan]: *i play bass*

[novan]: *get on top // rhcp (chili peppers)*

[novan]: *know the song?*

✧Jade✧: not really

✧Jade✧: got the mp3?

[novan]: *sure*

*[novan] sends: "05 Get On Top.mp3"*

✧Jade✧: so how's this chili peppers song coming along

[novan]: *well my fingers are killing me...*

[novan]: *and the song on repeat is insane*

[novan]: *but i shld be all gd in a bit :)*

✧Jade✧: hey when did u learn to play bass?

[novan]: *hmm*

[novan]: *15?*

[novan]: *music was a rebellion*

✧-Jade-✧: ooh, how so

[novan]: *my 'rents are always busy makin money*

[novan]: *thats the most important thing for them... cash, cash, cash*

[novan]: *i don't wanna be like that*

✧-Jade-✧: well that's good

✧-Jade-✧: that you're not like that =)

[novan]: *yea*

[novan]: *lol*

[novan]: *still remember how it started*

[novan]: *with sid vicious... he's the bass player for sex pistols*

✧Jade✧: sex pistols?

[novan]: *yea a REAL punk band from the 70s... i saw sid & was like 'damn, i have to play bass'*

✧Jade✧: LOL

[novan]: *google his picture*

✧Jade✧: ok

✧Jade✧: i think bass players are cool :P

[novan]: :) *\*nods in agreement\**

✎Jade✎: how's it like?  
 [novan]: *we keep the rhythm, with the drums*  
 [novan]: *if we make a mistake... u'll hear it right away*  
 [novan]: *and we've less antics than say, \*cough\* the lead guitarist \*cough\**  
 ✎Jade✎: LOL  
 [novan]: *bassists are very good with their fingers*  
 [novan]: *and some of us sing backup vocals, so that means we're good with our mouths too...*  
 ✎Jade✎: awesome \*that goes for your last sentence too ;)\*  
 [novan]: *haha :P*  
 ✎Jade✎: oh my i'm looking at some pix of sid vicious  
 ✎Jade✎: he's SO bangable  
 [novan]: *ROFL. it's too bad a preppy punk poseur of our day compared herself to sid in a SellOut Magazine interview.*

\*\**You have successfully received C:\Documents and Settings\Owner\My Documents\My Received Files\Red Hot Chili Peppers—Get On Top.mp3 from [novan].*\*\*

[novan]: *hey btw we're having a gig this month*  
 [novan]: *a few local bands are playing*  
 [novan]: *u free?*  
 ✎Jade✎: ooh!  
 ✎Jade✎: when? where?/  
 [novan]: *we're playing a couple of songs*  
 [novan]: *it's a long way more... weds 22 feb, 6pm. tix are free.*  
 [novan]: *it's at that open concourse, across from junkie's*  
 ✎Jade✎: Casbah?  
 [novan]: *yea that's the place*  
 [novan]: *hopefully the weather's good*  
 ✎Jade✎: yeah, it shld be  
 ✎Jade✎: it \*is\* summer all-year round in txc  
 [novan]: *lol yea*  
 ✎Jade✎: i shld be free =) wld love to hear u guys out  
 [novan]: *tnx. there's more info on [www.2zoneout2.com](http://www.2zoneout2.com)*  
 [novan]: *is ur cell no. same as b4?*

⌘Jade⌘: yup  
⌘Jade⌘: i'll let u know if i'm going  
⌘Jade⌘: i should be since i've nothing on  
[novan]: *alrighty :)*  
[novan]: *well nice talkin to ya*  
[novan]: *i gtg... got a long day tmr and i haven't  
showered the whole of today lol*  
⌘Jade⌘: ok yeah ok i've got to get some beauty sleep too  
⌘Jade⌘: arghhh! go bathe! HAHAHA...i can't stand that,  
sweaty, icky...feel, thing  
[novan]: *haha yea*  
[novan]: *u look about the same as before i guess?*  
⌘Jade⌘: lol yeah  
⌘Jade⌘: about the same, more or less =)  
[novan]: *alright*  
[novan]: *c ya there if youre coming :)*  
[novan]: *ttyl + g'nite//*

~ *Conversation ended on [1 Feb 2006, 12:50AM]* ~

I'll probably go support them but not sure who I'm asking along just yet. Or maybe I'll just go alone if I feel like.

Novan's birthday's around that time too. February 24th. He didn't mention it, but I remember anyway, so maybe I'll get something, just to be nice...

## **Regarding an Editor's comments on *EyeLeash***

*The following were from email correspondence with a former YA acquisitions editor (that I discussed EyeLeash with for 6 months), before the editor left for another publishing house. He never got to see the revised version (which would be the last quarter or so of the book). The editor that took his place wasn't interested in me/my book. Thank goodness for people like Mark Coker @ Smashwords, and the progressive people at Amazon.com!*

\* \* \*

...My reader and I agree that this is a surprising and hard-to-shake manuscript. You've got a very good handle on two critical elements of the book: your desperately conflicted, burdened-by-too-much-knowledge main character and the often-isolated, self-indulged communication style of her world.

*- Former YA Acquisitions Editor, Part I*

...I really liked your approach to an IM/blog love story. This is the first one I've seen that seemed like it was using the mediums to say something, rather than as a gimmick. I found that the medium and your excellent command of its details gave me a striking and intriguing picture of Jade and her situation. I like that she is the Hamlet of sex—she can't just do it; she overthinks. She is a wonderful combination of modern contradictions: she is theoretically sexually uninhibited but completely paralyzed by sexual information ["if u could switch pregnancy possibilities off, and erase all stds, that would be best" (line from an IM chat in book)].

*- Former YA Acquisitions Editor, Part II*

...Virginity isn't compatible with Jade's self-conception,

but she can't do anything about it for a whole host of reasons, despite her hyper-sexual milieu. You seem to be a Nabokovian, so I perhaps can say it reminds me of Humbert's lament near the beginning of *LOLITA* that he and Annabel cannot "mate as slum children would have so easily found an opportunity to do." I think you've hit upon a very interesting contemporary, universal teenage story in a very specific, human teenage character. That's no small easy feat.

- *Former YA Acquisitions Editor, Part III*

(after a terse paragraph about him leaving for another publishing house, and how our discussion would have to come to an end)

It happens.

- *Former YA Acquisitions Editor, Part IV*

**Excerpts from *4:Play***  
**(a multiple genre-crossing short story collection)**

*4:Play* is my 81,000-word contemporary cocktail of sumptuous short stories.

Summary: *4:Play* dives into the depths of navigating gender, sexuality, and the lines of desire.

Book Site: <http://missfey.blogspot.com>

\* \* \* \* \*

**Excerpt from *Black Velvet* / *4:Play***

“Shall we go?” he said after a while. I must have been staring. I must have looked dazed. I might have been drooling. I wouldn’t have known.

Christian was “cool” in high school: a little blasé, a little aloof. But now he was cool...in a mind-blowing kind of way. I heard a silent scream from him: *I know you want me. You’ll deny it, but I can wait. Shall we get it on?*

Suddenly, I picked up on his cologne. Spicy, exotic. I thought of my ruffled leopard thong.

“So,” I managed to say when I got back my tongue, “how was your day?”

He blabbered on about some University applications and classes. Was he playing the same game that I was? His (dark, intense) eyes betrayed the humdrum words coming out of his mouth. They seemed to see right into me.

*What is it about him?* I tried to reason with myself. Was it the fact that we already had a very good idea of what we looked like naked? Was it the fact I’d unwittingly confided

my self-loving ways in detail during an online chat? Was I at the super horny phase of my monthly cycle? Was I deluding myself with his influence on me?

“This is a guy flick though,” he said.

We were already at the theater? Oh my. And was his voice always like this? Smooth like caramel, cocoa butter, chocolate. Soothing...

“I don’t mind, really,” I replied. “Better than the cheesy warlocks versus wizards show.”

“I thought you’d say that,” Christian said, with a smile that knocked me out. “So...where’s the first stop on your trip?”

*I want your hands on me, I want to go down on you, I want to know what you taste like, I want to ride you like there’s no tomorrow, I thought.*

“Bangkok, Thailand,” I replied. I wasn’t kidding, that was my first stop.

The icy blast of cool air when we stepped into the theater was refreshing. I didn’t care what was going on. The theater was packed. ‘Exterminator’ was about aliens invading Earth, and an army of varsity cheerleaders with huge plasma guns who kept yapping their *Resistance Is Futile!* slogan was going to wipe them out, and I was trying not to squirm in my seat, though it was killing me whether I should slide my hand over and grope his crotch hard, or stroke his bare lithe forearm, which was inches away from my own, or maybe he—

“I gotta take a piss, I’ll be back in a bit,” he whispered into my ear, his lips so, so near my neck.

I stood up along with him. It was completely against my will. No, wait. I didn’t have one. He was the master, and I was the puppet.

We quickly made our way for the exit, so as not to annoy the other movie-goers. Christian and I headed down the carpeted passageway to the restrooms.

“I’ll wait for you outside,” he said. I nodded and entered the ladies’ room, wishing I could be like my roommate Tawnya for once.

I didn’t really need to go. I was trying to slap some sense



into myself. *He already has a girlfriend*, I told myself. *Don't go trying anything and getting yourself into trouble. Stop being such an obsessive freak. Don't mention anything to him, he might not feel the same. God, this restroom is perfect. He'd be here, right here, us facing the mirror this way, he'd be tasting and taking in the scent of my skin. We're gonna do it now in a matter of minutes ohmygod ohmygod ohmygod how exciting!! Dammit, stop fantasizing. I need to distract myself. Get yourself together, Aly!*

So I admired the shiny black sink, the painting of pink flowers by the side, the simmering orange glow of the restroom lights. I checked my hair, my face, my hair again, washed my hands, re-applied some lip gloss, cursed my eyeliner for smudging...and then, someone opened the door.

It was Christian. I turned around and leaned against the sink with my hands and the small of my back.

"Was just checking if you're done," he said. He was holding the door open.

"You could have called."

"Yeah." Still standing at the door. Looking up to see if there was anyone. He was thinking of something to say. "Aly." A statement, not a question.

He stepped in. Then he locked the main door behind him. He was doing the whole piercing gaze thing again. I was the helpless butterfly specimen being pinned down. "I'll let you," my eyes said to him.

I faced the mirror again.

Resistance. Was. Futile.

~~\*\*~~

## **Excerpt from *The Devilin Fey* / 4:Play**

### **Chapter I: Zac**

Zac Walsh.

He shared some physical likenesses with the stranger in my dreams. The pale, moonlit skin. Light, ash brown hair. A

well-proportioned, good physique.

What a mix-up.

Nobody dared to say anything about a famous alumnus of Art Ex University. Zac was the NYT-Bestselling Author of *Seduction 101: All The Dirt on Women*. It was obvious his entire existence centered around putting females ‘in their place’.

I was writing an exposé for the widely-read quarterly school magazine, entitled, *Zac Walsh's Portrayal Of Women*. It focused on the derogatory, negative social impact of the publication (complete with a hot pink cover of a platinum blonde bombshell with her heart shaped tushy, high up in the air), and why anybody with half a brain should take him for the scum he was.

He must have heard about it. He sent me an e-mail, saying he wanted to meet me in person. I didn't feel like replying, so I didn't.

In the next e-mail, he said he wanted to share his perspective, and be quoted as an original source in the write-up.

It would be “a unique opportunity”—I couldn't argue with that. I decided to be upfront, professional, and beat it after that.

We met at Bound'ry, a trendy upscale restaurant in the heart of town. I picked my best little black dress for the occasion, a chiffon tiered one shoulder by BCBG Max Azria.

Zac had a...presence. There was something in the way he carried himself. His medium layered hairstyle with side swept bangs exuded a daredevil, roguish kind of attitude. He looked younger than his twenty-nine years.

It made me think: maybe he *was* the stranger I had been dreaming about, for the past week or so. Sometimes, the stranger and I would be making love. I seemed to hear his soul: it was struggling, seeking something.

The crazy sentimentalist in me went one step ahead: *perhaps I had been lucky enough to find 'the man of my dreams'...literally?*

Zac's light grey eyes met my green, speckled ones. We had just been seated at the table.

“You know, Miss Fey,” he said, leaning in on my last name. “I think you and I are going to end up in the same bed, by the end of the night.”

He sounded more confident, than lewd. Still, I was going to stay on the smart, safe side.

“Really?” I replied. I even arched my boobies up a little bit, a subtle tease. “That’s charming.”

I took a sip of my drink before firing off some questions about his publications, all of which he calmly responded to with incredible rationality.

“I’m guessing you’re single?” Zac said.

“Is there anything wrong with that?” My tone was a tad bit...condescending.

“No—it’s a pity though. You make good company.”

If this smooth-talker thought he could flatter his way into bedding me, I was going to show him otherwise. “Funny how you don’t say that of women, in your writing,” I pointed out.

“It’s a matter of intelligence, or lack thereof.”

“That says something about most of the women you meet.”

“Well, I guess you’re not most women.”

That comment got my defenses down. I tried to look nonchalant, though I was rather pleased inside. It wasn’t something I heard often.

Which got me right where he wanted.

Later during the evening, I thanked him for the dinner, and announced that I was going to go home myself. But he said he’d take me back, “it’d be no trouble.” While he drove, we talked about yoga, traveling, and music bands.

“I might have been wrong about you,” I said later during the evening, when he’d sent me home. It was a test, just to see what his reaction would be. I could play him out, and live to tell the tale thereafter. I added, “It’s quite nice talking to you.”

*Zac Walsh the Great would waltz down the stairs to his Porsche Cayman, patting himself on the back. I was still going to write my article anyway!*

With a most reassuring smile, he said, “I liked our conversation too, Caitlin.”

I said, "You're the best player on the planet...and you know it."

He said, "Well, you're different...and you know that too."

"How so?"

"Not many girls know how to stand up for themselves...the things you said about my writing? They aren't completely false. Maybe...you're a rare breed of Woman."

God, I fell for my own game.

He leaned in and gave me a slow, sure kiss. Then his hands were on the sides of my waist. "You've heavenly hips," he murmured. It felt so, so good, and I thought *I'm not going to fight against this, am I?*

He stepped in, and before I knew it, we had proceeded to make out on my couch.

I suddenly had visions of my stranger in the night—and started hearing a conflicting refrain in my brain: *this cannot be, this isn't how it's supposed to be*. But if it not this, what then?

My stranger still didn't really have a face, just enigmatic bluish eyes, and I couldn't see what was behind those blue-grey eyes...so the chants in my mind shifted to *you're paranoid, it's okay, just enjoy the sensations...*

The truth was that shortly thereafter, it began to feel not quite so comfortable at all. I couldn't explain, why.

I kept seeing the stranger, and I felt I was letting him down—the figure whose eyes were now an even deeper, darker, more sullen shade, the further I got with Zac.

Zac used protection, I'll give him that. I was too hotted up to think about being responsible.

"How rough do you like it?..." he asked. We were on my bed. I didn't really know. I just went along, moaned like I was supposed to.

I left my sheer thigh high black stockings on. Massaged the side of his neck with my foot, one leg of mine over his shoulder, me lying back, propped on my elbows, looking up at him.

He was quite quiet, for the most part. It was starting to hurt at one point, but I focused on breathing and kept my

pelvic muscles relaxed.

*Do you know that this is my first time? That I've fallen for my own tricks?! I wanted to say. So far, I'd never let others get any. My standards were high. So what happened this time? Am I even attracted to you?...and I sighed, and if he heard it, I bet that Zac (in his self-obsessive ways) would have taken it to be a sigh of satisfaction.*

I gave some kittenish utterances—he smiled, with intervals of heavy breathing...I felt like I didn't mind having more, physically. But he lay down beside me when he was done.

I found myself in a mixture of feelings.

*How did that just happen...I don't really like him, do I...I don't know. Why'd I allow it...did 19 years of holding out amount to that?*

Most of all was a thorough, exasperating feeling of dissatisfaction—like the whole thing had been left hanging, unfinished, with me emptied, forgotten, tossed to the side, like a rag doll.

I found myself pining for my random midnight stranger. “Who are you?” I always wanted to ask. But I never had the chance. All I'd have of the night would be a collection of dream remnants, lodged somewhere in the recesses of my mind. It was always daybreak when I awoke, as the real world slowly came into focus...the same real world of plastic goods and money, of paying rent and attending school, and Zac Walsh—the man lying beside me that I cared nothing for. The sentiment was probably mutual.

~~\*\*~~

### **Excerpt from *The Gift* / 4:Play**

Hayashi Yu was running a contest for his 24th birthday. The global multi-talented megastar — a second No. 1 album on the Billboard 200, two box-office hits, launch of a unisex fashion line, and several lucrative endorsement deals in the past year alone — was offering one lucky fan the chance to win a date with him.

To enter, one needed to write a 200-400 word essay. The topic: *What birthday present would you get for Hayashi? Explain the reason behind your choice.*

I had been a fan of his ever since I saw the music video for his song, "Passion." It was the opening track of his debut album, "Get This." I was instantly hooked. His dance moves were fantabulous — I loved it when he did a turn and his shirt went up, showing off a bit of his lower back. He inherited all the good traits of his mixed racial background — the good style of the Chinese, the modesty of the Japanese, and the passion of the Spanish.

"Be humble and hardworking," was his motto. I thought about it when I was figuring what to write for the essay.

What would be a suitable present, for someone who literally could afford almost anything? Material goods like diamond watches weren't a good choice. I didn't think he'd find those things meaningful.

Then I thought of something simple and unfussy. I could even send the actual gift along with my entry form and essay, because it was compact enough to be sent in the mail. Besides, the official rules said nothing about not sending any "extra material."

I started writing the essay by hand, as a stream-of-consciousness type of letter. I decided to send it that way, in my original handwriting too. It sounded and looked more personal. I took about an hour to come up with the essay:

*Dear Hayashi,*

*I've been thinking about the ideal gift for your 24th birthday. It might not be particularly outstanding or extravagant, but I thought you might appreciate receiving a blindfold. Let me explain my choice of this humble gift...*

*It has a couple of practical uses. I believe a blindfold would:*

- a) help you rest your eyes, and*
- b) get a good sleep during the night.*

*On top of all the things you're busy with, I'm sure you have to endure an endless bombardment of camera flashes & video cameras being pointed at you from fans, the press, and the paparazzi. Some people don't realize they could seriously hurt or even kill somebody, when they go overboard with their crazed psycho stalking and/or chasing of celebrities.*

*You could easily carry around the blindfold with you — to and from your workplace(s), and have it with you when you travel too. A good sleep is imperative for optimum performance — and since you are someone that gives their all in everything they do, I think a daily good night's rest is the minimum that your body requires and deserves.*

*You could use the blindfold for some kinky fun action too. I think being blindfolded is exciting, because you'll be allowing your lover to do whatever they wanted, without you being able to actually see it coming. Also, I believe that with the "shutting out" of one's sense of sight (temporarily), the other senses are amplified/intensified. A little play goes a long way...*

*Metaphorically-speaking, the blindfold would be symbolic of looking past external appearances. I read in one of your interviews where you said that a girl's personality is more important than good looks, and I was very impressed with what you said, because you have killer good looks yourself, and while good looks can be a huge factor in achieving stardom, an increasing level of vanity might be the very thing that leads to one's downfall as well...which I think won't happen in your case, because I think you're smart and you seem to always know exactly what you're doing...and I think I am reaching the 400-word limit, so I shall stop here.*

*P.S. Included with this letter is my gift to you. I hope you enjoy it, however you wish. Happy B'day!*

*P.P.S. I love "Passion" — how can a person not get*

*up and dance to that song?!*

*Best Regards,  
Natalia Nguyen  
(Word Count = 400)*

I got him a soft, plush-feel zebra print blindfold, from an online store called LoveHoney. Using a silver permanent marker pen, I wrote “I rock” on the blindfold, to personalize the item a little bit more just for him.

I sent it off, expecting a 1% chance of winning. I was sure there’d be many other contenders. It was very similar to playing the lottery.

The announcement of the results was postponed by a week (there were almost 10,000 entries in all), but the date finally arrived. I held my breath as I opened the email with the subject line, Winners of ‘Win a Date with Hayashi Yu’ Contest:

***First Prize (Date with Hayashi Yu):***

*Anselia Taylor, “Genuine Bruce Lee handwritten & signed letters from 1960s”*

***1st Runner-up (\$500 goody bag/HY autographed merchandise):***

*Jennifer Poon, “Stan Lee Commissioned Comic Book Line”*

***2nd Runner-up (\$250 goody bag/HY autographed merchandise):***

*Lexi Knowles, “Consolidated International Fans’ Scrapbook”*

Oh well, I thought. At least I tried.

I clicked on the links to the winning essays — diehard fans knew that Hayashi Yu considered the legendary Stan Lee and Bruce Lee to be huge inspirations, in his pursuit of success. I probably got too carried away with my own “creativity.”

The date with the winner went on ahead as planned on March 11, Hayashi’s birthday. They were at Zero9, a trendy upscale bistro which is famous for its eclectic menus of fine



cuisine with modern twists and zingy flavors. I saw some of the uploaded pictures and videos of Hayashi and the contest winner, Anselia, and thought they looked good together. Anselia looked like a model that was going for a photo shoot — Hayashi was suave as always, his medium-length copper-highlighted hair pushed back. He was in a dark blue shirt, layered over with a black jacket, and sleek distressed jeans.

“Are you dating anyone right now?” was one of the questions Anselia asked him. She hardly took her eyes off him. In fact, she looked hungry throughout the entire dinner date, despite the variety of dishes that were served up.

“No,” Hayashi replied in his cool debonair way. “I am just too, too busy.”

I wondered if he was really telling the truth or not. I’d like to maintain my privacy, if I were a celebrity.

The next day, I found a package in my mailbox when I got home from work. It was addressed to “Miss Natalia Nguyen,” and had no sender address. I didn’t recall making any recent online purchases.

The box’s contents were less discreet than its outer packaging. In it was a Tracey Cox Bondage Kit, which contained a tie blindfold sash, and four wrist and ankle cuffs with Velcro fastenings.

At the bottom of the box was a short note, written in simple handwriting:

*I’d like to try this out—I need a partner—Are you game?*

Behind it was a cell number.

Good Lord, I wouldn’t dare...would I?

I dialed the number.

## **Regarding an Editor's comments on *Wicked Lovely* (a 'memorable' story in *4:Play*)**

*I sent two excerpts from Ed & Julie (I've since changed the title to Wicked Lovely), in early 2009 to a magazine.*

*I'm not including this to "vent" any frustration—I just enjoy whacking high-and-mighty sorts. Here's the correspondence, for your amusement + entertainment.*

\* \* \*

From: The XXXXX & XXXXX Submissions  
<submissions@thexxxxandxxxxx.com>  
To: Jess C Scott <missfey@gmail.com>  
Date: Wed, Mar 4, 2009 at 3:16 PM  
Subject: Re: Fiction Submission: Jess C Scott, Wicked Lovely

Alright. I don't think you quite understood my criticisms. We do not like the voice of Ed Drake. This next chapter is just the same. He speaks like a child -- and there are parts that are just nonsensical like: "...I'd pay the bozos inside if I had cash to spare so that I could loan the restroom for a half hour or so." Honestly, I've got to ask: have you ever edited this thing? If we didn't like chapter one, which at least introduces the characters and the plot, why on Earth would we want to publish chapter two, which only makes sense because I've read chapter one. Well, y'know what: **we are literary snobs**. THEXXXXXANDXXXXX is a literary, sex & arts magazine. It isn't a print version of literotica. It isn't a print version of literotica. I don't think one of us has read Twilight and I don't think any of us every will, but like Date Movie and Epic Movie and Superhero Movie, we can usually smell crap from across the room. Rule of thumb for something like Twilight; if it's a book that has it's biggest audience among people *who never read anything*, it's not good, it's grade

nine book report pulp.

I wrote that the first bit of Drake you sent us didn't pick up steam and that it was repetative. Rather than take the time to consider these comments, you just sent the next chunk of your story, as much as you could wedge within our word-count guidelines, as soon as possible. And I said we didn't consider your haiku as the sort of haiku we'd publish, and then you just sent us another ten of the same thing. I've got to ask: have you actually read an issue of our magazine? You say you're trying to get as many excerpts published as possible before looking for an agent. To me, that means your just dumping old pieces which have never been edited on as many laps as possible.

I didn't want to be mean, but when you replied almost instantaneously to my letter of last night it struck me that you aren't taking us seriously, not our publication or our time. Please do not submit again.

Sincerely,

Mr. "I-am-a-Literary-Snob"

\* \* \*

From: Jess C Scott <missfey@gmail.com>  
To: The XXXXX & XXXXX Submissions  
<submissions@thexxxxandxxxxx.com>  
Date: Mon, Mar 9, 2009 at 10:26 AM  
Subject: Re: Fiction Submission: Jess C Scott, Wicked Lovely

Dear (Mr. X),

Most of the time, I know what I'd like a character to sound like, and I have my reasons for it. Not everyone will see eye-to-eye with me on it, and that's no biggie.

Regarding one of my poems, perhaps I should have omitted

the word ‘haiku’ from the title itself, and reverted the title back to its original version (which, with the omission of the word ‘haiku’, would read “*txt-msgs [from one guy 2 another]*”), so that a certain level of objectivity could be better maintained while reviewing the piece. In your previous mail, you said that I sent “another ten of the same thing.” That might be true, but technically, that isn’t necessarily true either, because that poem brings together 14 stanzas to form one stand-alone piece. Now whether each individual 5-7-5-syllabled stanza IS a haiku, or not, needn’t be an issue, when the poem is taken in its entirety.

As to whether I edited *Ed Drake*, indeed, I did! As carefully and meticulously as I do with all my other material. A horny teenager isn’t going to sound like Shakespeare, and if that’s going to ruffle up a few feathers here and there, I am fine with that.

PS: I’m sure William Faulkner edited *The Sound and the Fury*. As did Bret Easton Ellis, James Joyce, E. E. Cummings, and Emily Dickinson et al., with their respective works.

Jess.

\* \* \*

Late 2009: It was nice to receive a reader’s review regarding *Wicked Lovely*—

“Loved it...I was surprised that I ended up liking “Wicked Lovely” ...thinking about [this] sort of theme is generally something I don’t indulge in...but it worked in this story, [like in the] Angel Sanctuary series...their sheer desire to be with one another, that that other person is the only person for them...made the story for me.”

—namiererror on LibraryThing

~~\*\*~~

**Excerpt from 1: *The Intern*  
(*upcoming mainstream novel /  
Book01 in a contemporary YA series*)**

*1: The Intern* is a completed, 65,000-word novel—a teenage version of *Dirty Dancing* meets *Punk'd*.

Summary: A 17-year-old intern must choose between trusting an irresistibly suave dance instructor—or her instincts.

TBR: ~Aug-Sept 2010

**Chapter 1**

“Hey—check out the first song on the list.”

I glance at the catalog Chester Evans, my internship partner, is showing me. The page lists the radio channels provided by the airline. There’s the *Top 40s* channel, *Adult Rock, Blues/Swing* channel, and so on. The one he’s pointing at is *Classic Rock*, and “Suzy Q” is the first song.

“Your all-time favorite?” I wink.

“Right on,” Chester says with a mighty grin.

His chin rests on his hand that’s propped up on the armrest between our seats. A couple of fingerprint marks smear the lenses of his black, plastic-framed glasses. His dusty blond hair is neat as usual, and pretty much unstyled.

I smile. I’ve gone with “Suzie Q” after Chester introduced me to that rock song. It has more flavor than “Suzie Quinn” anyhow. Chester told me about the song when we were thirteen or fourteen. I was surprised he listened to hard rock. I thought he’d be more into something like classical music.

Once in a while, in moments like this, I almost think Chester might be the one.

But then I get real. Not Chester. He’s more like a brother to me.

“Oh, and take a look at this.” He points to a small

image—a close-up shot of a woman’s mouth with bright red lips, with the caption: *Devil or Angel*.

“What’s that?” I enquire.

He speed-reads the rest of it, then turns the page.

“Nothing important?”

“Yep,” he concludes. “Just another bunch of silly people, brought to you by yet another brainless reality TV show.”

We both laugh. I’ve always had a love-hate kind of relationship with reality shows. There’s something addictive and entertaining about even the worst of them.

The kid behind starts kicking the back of my seat, adding more distress to the slight migraine and blocked ears I’m experiencing during my maiden flight.

“Are you excited about the internship?” Chester asks suddenly, rubbing his chin lightly. He does that sometimes, when he’s deep in thought.

“Are you?” I ask in turn.

“Sure, aren’t you?”

“Yeah,” I lie. “It’s a privilege we made the cut for the Spring Break internship.” While the internship is the highlight of Nova Academy’s junior year, I was half-hoping I’d be thrown into an exotic location, like India or Japan. I’ve lived all my life in Essex, Vermont, a quiet and scenic region in the northeast.

“We’re Nova Academy’s finest.”

“Wear your t-shirts with pride,” I reply, imitating the shrill voice of our advisor, Mrs. De Sousa.

Chester’s wearing the shirt right now, and he points to it. The t-shirts have our school crest and school name emblazoned on the front.

“You are the *crème de la crème*, the best of the best!” Chester raises his chin up slightly, the exact way Mrs. De Sousa does when she’s drilling it into our heads that we’re from a super school.

I hate it when they say such things. I think it’s too elitist. But Nova Academy *is* one of the finest high schools in the country. It’s a school for gifted and talented students, and has spawned some prodigies and now famous people.

“I still remember Pixel Wallace.” Chester continues

flipping through the pages of the catalog. “Accepted into Harvard at the age of fourteen.”

Stuff like that makes me wonder what I’m doing at Nova.

Pixel and I had some classes together. She was discussing “projective geometry” with the teacher, at the speed of a bullet, while the rest of us worked on some algebra. Math whizzes like Chester Evans understood “projective geometry,” but not me. I tested into Nova’s program because of my high score on Languages and Linguistics. It’s probably due to my interest in cultural studies.

“Did you get a chance to check out *The Lysistrata* online?”

“A little bit. It looks posh.” I am halfhearted about the fact that we won’t be getting paid as interns though, as with many other interns...

“It does look posh. It’s about the number one museum around!” Chester must have sensed my lack of enthusiasm. “Come on, I know you like history. It’s going to be fun.”

Suddenly, the seatbelt signals above start to flash. My ears hurt. The pilot’s voice comes on. There is some audio static before anyone can hear what he’s saying.

“Ladies...and gentlemen...”

But the static takes over again. I feel like lurching. My hands are freezing.

“You look stressed,” says Chester. He’s right about that.

“I’ve heard about horror stories, where passenger’s cups and saucers went flying,” I mutter to him.

“During turbulence?”

“Yeah.”

The plane jerks. A baby starts to cry somewhere. I stare out the window at the surrounding dusky, gray skies. We will be landing at night.

“Maybe it’s the wind,” Chester says flatly. He gazes out the small square box of a window. “Unless a bird got in the engine.”

I wish he had not said that. I stare at the motion sickness bag in front of me.

Then, Chester holds my hand. “It’ll be okay in a bit.”

My other hand clutches the edge of the seat. I think he

notices.

“Think happy thoughts...” he says, taking a look out of the window too. He lets go of my hand to put his seatbelt on.

Happy thoughts, happy thoughts.

I'd like to rest my head against his shoulder, just to feel safe, but I don't. I think it might give him the wrong idea. Everyone already thinks we're a couple but we're just good friends. Of course people will believe what they want to believe.

I recollect some fun incidents with Chester over the years. Way back in the fourth grade, he got me a lime green pencil box for my birthday, while I got him a giant chocolate bar (our birthdays are a few days apart). I remember being taller than him until around eighth grade when he suddenly shot up, and now he's a lot taller than me. He's also been working out these last couple of years, so his name has popped up in “girl talk.”

We've been on group dates but never just the two of us, so I don't know why people think of us as an item. I never give that impression. Like I said: you can't stop people from believing what they want to.

The plane shakes a little again and I am jolted out of my memories. As I try to think about more “happy thoughts,” I realize how much of a life I am lacking, and how much I am missing out on. Apart from maintaining good grades, reading lots, and going on the once-in-a-blue-moon “date,” what else have I actually been up to? Yes, I'll be in the world-class city of Roxeth for a fortnight—and work starts on Monday, tomorrow, oh joy—but two weeks isn't going to make a magical difference. Besides, cities are busy, crowded, and noisy. And I hear public transport in Roxeth is expensive, so I've brought extra money for that. If not, there's always the good old plastic card (thanks, Dad).

I start to fantasize. Something straight out of a romantic novel or movie, with me in the starring role, of course. I dream of someone sweeping me off my feet, someone that would show me something “new,” something that I never knew existed...I will melt in his arms and he will show me what passionate love can be.



*Ah...happy thoughts.*

The plane lands smoothly. I didn't know we had been so close to landing.

Chester hits his head when we stand up to get our bags from the overhead compartment. I laugh because he looks cute when he cringes.

It is nighttime now. Everyone's standing up and getting ready to step out of the airplane. Everyone seems to be in a big rush.

I look outside, and see the bus waiting for us. It'll take the passengers from the plane to the airport, which is a short distance away.

"Thank you for flying with us," the pretty stewardess at the exit says. Chester and I smile politely. We must look disheveled next to the cabin crew. I'm just about to point out Chester's dark rings under his eyes to him, when I notice something else when we step out of the plane.

The temperature.

It is a little warm. The air isn't frosty, and doesn't bite at your fingertips.

It's nice and humid.

## **MANIFESTOS**

*This is a condensed version of my quite-long(35-page) advertising plan which I submitted for BUS 345: Advertising, in the Spring 2010 semester. The paper was written with regards to “establishing my brand identity as an author.” I scored full marks for the paper (yay).*

*P.S. If you know someone who is sitting on the fence with indie publishing, send them a copy of Porcelain and highlight the following points.*

### **Indie vs. Traditional Publishing**

#### **II. SITUATION ANALYSIS**

##### **2.0 Historical Context of Organization**

“Jess C Scott” is a small business with very focused aspirations. By utilizing the power of new media and the internet, Jess C Scott is able to directly (and promptly) bring to the market unique books that stand apart from the cookie-cutter commercial books churned out by the publishing industry (which take an average of 12-18 months to actually hit the market). According to Doug Grad Literary Agency, whose founder spent twenty-two years as a senior editor at four major New York publishing houses:

Publishers, unfortunately, have a copycat mentality, so once a genre gets hot, they quickly overbuy and over-publish until the marketplace is saturated and the public gets sick of the rotten imitations on the shelves. Look at what happened to the Chick Lit genre, and is happening to the Young Adult Vampire genre right now. (Grad, 2010)

I have kept to a corporate culture of integrity, originality, innovativeness, and non-conformity. This is because of my tendency to not mimic what is currently popular at any given time. I also believe that high-quality products that will stand the test of time, and this value associated with my brand identity, in time, will provide me with a competitive selling edge.

Critical moments include the occasion I gained the attention of a young adult acquisitions editor. I made the mistake of spending 6 months discussing revisions to my manuscript, before he left for another publishing house. The lesson I learned from the mistake was to keep writing new material, and to be productive instead of worrisome. I also learned that indie publishing would be a better option if a book is truly too radical to be accepted for publication by a mainstream publishing house.

Successes include two blog tours completed for my first two books, *EyeLeash: A Blog Novel*, and *4:Play: A Contemporary Cocktail of Erotic Short Stories*, which helped build credibility and attribute a certain level of professionalism to my brand identity. I attracted buyers with a fixed initial selling price of \$4.99 (e-book version). Another success includes increasing brand exposure by utilizing the promotional tools provided by Smashwords.com, an independent e-book publishing platform. I have also taken advantage of some of the features provided by Amazon.com (their Kindle e-publishing platform, and ‘tag’ options), to increase my products’ visibility on the market. My second book, *4:Play*, hit #25 on an Amazon Kindle bestseller list in January 2009 (under the “Social Sciences > Popular Culture” category), and approached the #10,000 ranking in Kindle sales overall. *4:Play* also appears as Amazon’s #2 book in the “Erotica Books” forum. *EyeLeash* was nominated for “Best Books of 2009” at Goodreads, and appears as Amazon’s #1 book in the “YA Issues” forum on Amazon.

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## **2.1 Industry Analysis**

### 2.1.1 Current Industry Climate

George Bernard Shaw, a famous and controversial 20th century English dramatist (whose first book was published fifty years overdue—when publishers would publish anything that had his name on it), had this to say about publishers:

I object to publishers: the one service they have done me is to teach me to do without them. They combine commercial rascality with artistic touchiness and pettishness, without being either good business men or fine judges of literature. All that is necessary in the production of a book is an author and a bookseller, without the intermediate parasite. (Bernard, 1990)

Independent publishing in the digital era offers what George Bernard Shaw dreamed of. Anyone can write a book, and get it in the hands of potential readers, without having to wade through a sea of literary agents and editors. The entire traditional publishing industry is made up of a series of costs, overheads, and ways of using up incredible amounts of time which might be used doing something productive. Big publishers will not look at unsolicited manuscripts from un-agented writers, and taking 6-12 months to respond to the submission of a full manuscript is considered an industry standard for “working in a timely manner.” The endless series of procedures for simply getting a book considered by a literary agent, are obstructive. Literature is competing with powerful media for space in people’s lives, and inefficiency doesn’t help (Wallis, 2009).

Authors also often have no say and/or control in the traditional publishing process. According to established author, critically acclaimed novelist, and National Book Award finalist John Edgar Wideman:

I’ve been thinking about alternatives for a long time. I

like the idea of being in charge. I have more control over what happens to my book. And I have more control over whom I reach. (Reid, 2010)

Wideman notes his “distaste” for what he calls mainstream publishing’s “blockbuster syndrome”—the tendency for large trade publishing houses to focus the bulk of their resources on only the books deemed to have bestseller potential (Reid, 2010).

### 2.1.2 Self-publishing is no longer a “last resort”

Independent authors have been quick to adopt e-books as a format for rapid publishing. Whereas traditionally published print books require months or years to sell to a publisher (if ever), and then 12-18 months more before the books appear in bookstores, e-books offer instant publishing. The tools to publish and distribute e-books are available to any writer at little to no cost. Free e-book self-publishing platforms, such as Amazon Digital Text Platform, Smashwords, and Sony’s recently announced Publisher Portal, allow writers to upload their manuscript as a Microsoft Word document, and start selling it online to a worldwide audience within minutes or days. Major e-book retailers such as Barnes & Noble and Amazon have opened up their stores to independently published e-books, allowing authors to bypass publishers altogether (Coker, 2009).

As an indie author, the author has full control over both the creative and business aspects of the publishing process. Publishing-on-demand (POD) is also an attractive feature of self-publishing, where hardcopies are only printed when a purchase is made. This saves resources such as trees and warehousing space. Through accelerated self-publishing techniques, it is now possible to go from concept and idea to finished product to retail distribution within 45 days, versus 12-18 months with most traditional publishers.

### 2.2.3 Concentration: E-books over Print

Mark Coker, founder of the e-publishing platform Smashwords, made the following predictions for Book Publishing in the year 2020:

1. 95% of all reading will be on screens.

2. There will be fewer bookstores, though books will be more plentiful than ever before. We will all be authors, publishers and booksellers.

3. The entire book supply chain from author to customer will become atomized into its component bits. Value-adders will continue to find great success in publishing. Dinosaurs, leeches and parasites will be flushed out of new publishing ecosystems faster than ever before.

4. There will be more published authors than ever before, and collectively they will earn record revenues, yet individually the average “published” author 10 ears from now will earn less than the average “commercially published” author today. Advantage will go to those with best ability to reach their audience.

5. Authors will write for a global market. (Rivera, 2010)

## **2.3 Competitor Analysis**

### 2.3.1 Main Competitors

#### Figure 2.5: SWOT Analysis

[to analyze market position of commercially published authors + traditional publishing industry]

===Strengths===

- Prestige
- Presence in bookstores
- Agents with good contacts, particularly in the film

industry

- Strong brand names; can charge higher prices

===Weaknesses===

- 12-18 month production time
- Outdated business model; high cost structure; resistant to change such as increasing popularity of e-books
- Bulk of royalties going to publisher (with 15% of author's cut going to agent)
- Unrealistic expectations (expecting a book to earn out the advance royalties in the span of two weeks; expecting customers to pay the same price for e-books as for print hardcopies)

===Opportunities===

- Indie authors can take advantage of the speed and efficiency that indie publishing offers
- Indie authors only share royalties with the respective publishing platform
- Indie authors can set their own price, and create valuable material that is not pigeonholed and/or pre-determined by publishers to sink or swim

===Threats===

- Perpetuating the notion that indie authors are of a lesser caliber than those "commercially published"
- When major bookstores close, a big portion of the publishing industry's model is removed. This is a threat to big publishers, not indie authors
- Bestselling blockbuster books
- Increasingly poor reputation among customers, for charging higher prices for and delaying the release of e-books. This is a threat to big publishers, not indie authors

Figure 2.6: SWOT Analysis

(to analyze market position of indie authors + indie publishing)

===Strengths===

- Speed and efficiency
- More readers are turning to indie authors, to find something that's cheap and good

===Weaknesses===

- Many are first-time novelists, who may not present themselves professionally (both in terms of work produced, and persona in public)
- Online piracy

===Opportunities===

- Indie authors can strive to present themselves as writers who are committed to excellence, on both the creative and business side
- Offer value, if not, all that's left is price

===Threats===

- Proliferation of indie authors makes it harder for one to stand out
- Big publishers getting their act together, which would dilute the empowerment technology gives to indie authors

### 2.3.3 Standing out as an indie author in the internet era

If indie authors want to stand out, they must invest the resources and effort necessary to produce and promote quality work that satisfies readers (Coker, 2010).

According to Nathan Bransford, a well-respected literary agent:

The traditional tools at publishers' disposal aren't as effective as they used to be: ...bookstores are closing



and taking with them the precious hit-making front-store real estate (which publishers pay dearly for), advertising is costly and sporadically effective...publishers have been slow to adapt to the potential of the Internet and especially social networking. (Bransford, 2009)

Indie books sell an average of 1-500 copies during the first year (Patterson, 2008). Many Kindle bestsellers by independent authors are priced at \$0.99. Amazon's current royalties are split 65% to 35% (with 65% going to Amazon). The company will be shifting their model later in 2010 such that the author receives 70%.

Having a brand identity means being able to say:

I AM the brand. (Gitomer, 2007)

Personal branding is not about who you know—it's about who knows you. Establishing a good position in the marketplace allows for one to compete less. Networking should not be viewed as work, but as life skills and social skills combined with sales skills (Gitomer, 2007).

Navigating a book in a digital world means focusing less on mass media, and more on social media. Less on making money, and more on creating a sustainable business model (Goodman, 2009).

## **VIII. CONCLUSION**

### **8.0 Conclusion**

The indie author that will succeed in today's marketplace has to be a boot-strapping solopreneur. The key recommendation for success lies in seizing the opportunities offered by indie publishing. The refusal to be dominated, mistreated, and boxed-in by mainstream traditional publishers, and the commitment to producing quality work

for people who love reading and books and a good story, will add value to Jess C Scott's personal brand identity.

Maintaining a strong online presence, by exploiting the range of social media platforms online, is another key recommendation for success. I intend to stay focused on producing quality work, as I utilize free social media to create a strong brand identity. The fact that I don't have the overhead costs that the traditional publishing industry is saddled with allows me to work with speed and efficiency.

The following quote is a variation of the motto that indie author and MBA-holder, K.L. Brady, keeps to, for the best competitive edge over mainstream publishers who focus too much on money:

Keep it real...and keep it simple. (Brady, 2010)

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## **WHY I WRITE**

Why I Write *is my writing manifesto—an overview of what usually goes on in my head, and what guides the direction and perspective(s) of my written work.*

*This was originally posted on my author blog/website, as “My Goals as a Writer<sup>1</sup>.”*

**Sunday, April 18, 2010**

### **Why I Write**

(and what I work at achieving, as a writer)...

I use a lot of /slashes/ throughout this post, as a punctuation mark and for various other purposes. It’s an idiosyncrasy of mine when I’m trying to sort out my thoughts. I keep it down in my books (with the exception of the short story, *Porcelain!*).

Over the years, I’ve scrawled numerous times in my handwritten journals on why I write, things I want to achieve with my writing, projects I have in mind, and so on...

Here’s a distilled overview of what usually goes on in my head, and what guides the direction and perspective(s) of my written work.

#### **1. Stories > Categorization**

I understand the importance of book categories (my second book currently sells better than the first—its niche is “erotic short stories”)...but I’ll never write a book “according to the specifications of its genre/category.” I write because I

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<sup>1</sup> <http://jesscscott.wordpress.com/2010/04/18/my-goals-as-a-writer/>

have things to say/share via a story.

There were literary agents who said *EyeLeash* (my debut blog/IM novel) was more of a blog than a book. There were the agents who handle adult commercial fiction who said it was “YA (young adult),” while the YA agents said it was “a little explicit” [they were being kind ;)]. Erotica publishers told me to try GLBT publishers with *4:Play* (which deliberately crosses multiple genres), while the GLBT publishers said the percentage of GLBT material in the book wasn’t high enough for it to be considered “GLBT”! I rest my case.

Erotica has a vast range of explicitness, types of sex, and quantity of sex. As with erotica, I believe human life is as diverse, which is what I aim to reflect/capture, with writing.

## 2. Quality > Quantity

There are specific word counts a writer has to adhere to, as I posted on a(n eye-opening) thread on Kindle Boards<sup>2</sup>.

Adult fiction: 80,000-100,000 words

Young Adult fiction: 40,000-60,000 words

Short Story Collections: 40,000-75,000 words

Historical Fiction: 80,000-140,000 words

Adult Fantasy: 90,000-140,000 words

Personally, I like writing in the 40K-80K range. I understand publishers “have a certain formula to determine page length, printing costs...and other factors, which have a direct result in the word count they’re looking for” (jonfmerz<sup>3</sup>, 2010).

Personally, I find writing according to word counts to be quite counter-productive. You go round in circles trying to

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<sup>2</sup>

<http://www.kindleboards.com/index.php/topic,22683.msg426978.html#msg426978>

<sup>3</sup>

<http://www.kindleboards.com/index.php/topic,22683.msg427464.html#msg427464>

create a manuscript to appease agents and publishers (and their overhead costs), at the expense of the story, the characters, and the readers. I strongly prefer to read (and/or produce) 3 pages of a masterpiece than 300 pages of garbage. The question is, which do readers prefer? Or do publishers assume that readers cannot discern the difference?

### 3. Diversity > Stereotyping

According to AgentQuery.com<sup>4</sup> (as of 17 April, 2010):

Multi-cultural can be a tricky genre to simply pin down because it can mean different things to different literary agents and publishers. Most insiders will agree that multi-cultural fiction is **a code word** for books that possess racial and ethnic diversity **within the depiction** of its characters, cultures, and conflicts...while we certainly consider works representing Asian, Indian, and other ethnic cultures and characters as “multi-cultural”, some agents and publisher only mean African-American and Latino fiction when they use “multi-cultural” as a genre tag. For this reason, “Multi-cultural” **has as diverse a meaning** as the racial and ethnic groups it’s intended to describe.

“Code word” being defined as “a word or name used clandestinely to refer to another name or word” (define:Code-word<sup>5</sup>, 2010). I can’t help but gag at the last sentence. At the risk of being blacklisted for being too “outspoken,” the above paragraph can be taken to mean that racial stereotypes are to be perpetuated, because (from the publisher’s perspective), anything else is going to be a commercial risk. There’s always the reason that “publishing is a risky business,” and that something new/different, is

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<sup>4</sup> [http://agentquery.com/genre\\_descriptions.aspx](http://agentquery.com/genre_descriptions.aspx)

<sup>5</sup>

[http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&defl=en&q=define:Code-word&e i=x9fJS6qGIcP88Abp9uiBBQ&sa=X&oi=glossary\\_definition&ct=title&ved=oCAYQkAE](http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&defl=en&q=define:Code-word&e i=x9fJS6qGIcP88Abp9uiBBQ&sa=X&oi=glossary_definition&ct=title&ved=oCAYQkAE)

“not going to be what the public wants.” On the other hand, how are things ever going to change if the same old things keep being produced?

(Answer = indie publishing = no middlemen!)

To my knowledge, I haven't had any readers/customers complain about the multicultural aspects in my work. Maybe it's because I don't deliberately make a big deal out of the respective characters' cultural background (contrary to what this post might suggest). I just feel that people of all races and cultures should be equally represented in the mass media. I have never underestimated the power of mass media (maybe because I'm a former mass communications student...)—including the effects racial, ethnic, and gender stereotyping in the mass media have on society.

I was aware from a young age that the “multi-cultural” characters in mainstream fiction were (and continue to be) largely portrayed in rather narrow terms. That is not racial diversity. Maybe it's because I grew up in Singapore (looking back, it's easy to take Racial Harmony Day<sup>6</sup> for granted). So excuse me while I continue to feature a whole range of multicultural characters (Asian, Black, White, Mixed, etc.) with my projects. A big inspiration is MJ's “Black or White”<sup>7</sup> video, which never fails to make an impact.

#### **4. Authenticity/Originality > Safety/Conventionality**

I know that being an innovator isn't easy. History proves this time and time again. The product is new, the product is unknown by the market, it might take a while before it “is recognized” as having some worth. Being original is also very tiring. It's easier to ride along on what's currently popular, and try cashing in along the way while the topic/genre is still hot. But with fads, perhaps it's a “here today, gone tomorrow” type of thing. I like being committed to excellence, competence, and the creation of something that has longevity. It makes the effort of writing a book more

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<sup>6</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial\\_Harmony\\_Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_Harmony_Day)

<sup>7</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_or\\_White](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_or_White)

worthwhile.

Sometimes, I will deviate from mainstream conventions (*EyeLeash* has deliberate spelling/grammatical errors, at points, like when the protagonist blogs illuminating entries while massively hungover)—but never for gimmicky purposes. The last thing I want to do is bore and/or confuse a reader.

## 5. Alternative + Mainstream/Commercial

I enjoy writing both experimental/innovative/alternative material, as well as work that could be considered mainstream/commercial. It keeps me balanced (the same way I enjoy writing contemporary fiction, though most of the time, I'm reading old school classics).

It could be due to the fact that I'm astrologically a Virgo/Pisces (sun/moon) combination (like Michael Jackson, Moby, Leonard Cohen, and Liam Gallagher). Virgo (#6) and Pisces (#12) are opposite signs—so I'll always be pulled in “two different directions.” If you think astrology is bollocks<sup>8</sup>, okay. If you'd like to know your moon sign (as opposed to the sun sign), you can start with this moon sign calculator<sup>9</sup>. Once I knew my moon sign (back in mid-2006), it was full speed ahead from there with the rest of my chart, lol.

So there you have it...my writing manifesto.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bullocks>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.lunarium.co.uk/moonsign/calculator.jsp>



## **LOVE**

*When I was a young kid, I used to wonder why 90% of song lyrics were to do with the subject of love. I fell in love for the first time when I was 15.5 years old—and well, I suppose it's been “on my mind” (in some way or other) ever since.*

### **Meaning of Love, Life**

I've never known Love to be a light feeling. Romance can be light-hearted and fun—but if it's a real love that runs deep (which is what I'm interested in seeking—nothing less), I will endlessly soul-search to gain a better and truer understanding of what it is I really want/need/desire.

Occasionally, this leads to bouts of fixation and obsession where I'll ponder, and ponder, and ponder, on love, life, sex, self-identity, and relationships. My thoughts tend to influence the characters/stories in my works of fiction.

**Side Note:** For those of you into astrology, I'm a Venus Scorpio.

Here are some key sections I remember including in my books, with regards to the subject.

<http://nc-17.feedmyego.com>

May 5 2006 10.32PM

[music playing: The Bad Touch—Bloodhound Gang]

i am:

[THE FOOL]

love is a red heart  
and a warning sign

at the same time

what's it gonna be  
do i let things be

maybe you could be mine  
or maybe we'll be entwined

aimless in this  
sexless  
foreplay.

~ *EyeLeash, Novan Chang / Chapter 5*

V-Day...if you need this one day in a year to show everyone  
else you truly care for "your loved one" I think it's quite  
stupid.

I hate this commercialism. It's all artificial, and has nothing  
to do with real love.

~ *EyeLeash, Jade Ashton / Chapter 2*

I was flipping channels, watching this cheerleading program  
on MTV. They took a field hockey girl and "transformed" her  
into a cheerleader by the end of the show.

I was just wondering: what if she liked field hockey better?

~ *EyeLeash, Jade Ashton / Chapter 8*

\* \* \*

Last night I was seriously considering whether I was a  
bisexual or not but I don't think so though I'm not sure if I'd  
like to be and argh I don't think there's anything wrong with  
that, if you like a person, you like the person, not their  
genitals.

~ *Adriana's journal snippet / Story #4 in 4:Play*

“I suppose it’s not a social norm, and not a manly thing to do — to feel, discuss feelings. So that’s what I’m giving the finger to. Social norms and stuff...what good are social norms, really? I think all they do is project a limited and harmful image of people. It thus *impedes* a broader social acceptance of what someone, or a group of people, might actually be like.”

~ *Yin / Story #10 in 4:Play*

\* \* \*

“Being healthy is not defined by the number of hours you workout or the amount of calories you eat. Eat in moderation and remember to move everyday. A fit, healthy body—that is the best fashion statement.”

– Jo.Zee, 21, dance instructor.

~ *1: The Intern / Chapter 6*

I. Melt.

I’m honestly seeing fireworks.

I open my eyes. Feel the air in my lungs.

“Have a good night.” And Jo.Zee rides off into the night. Those sweet lips. My, oh my, I could kiss those lips all night long.

Good things come to those who wait.

~ *1: The Intern / Chapter 9*

\* \* \*

Nin knew how much humans loved money, riches, and material things—though he never really could understand

why. The more technologically advanced the human species got, the more isolated they seemed to become, at the same time. It was alarming, how humans could spend entire lifetimes engaged in all kinds of activities, without getting any closer to knowing who they really were, inside.

~ *The Other Side of Life (upcoming urban fantasy series) / Chapter 1*

Kate looked upon Nin admirably. Having him as a partner-in-crime—if only on this one occasion, which she hoped would only be the start of something more—was more revitalizing than the cheap thrills of a cookie-cutter shallow, superficial romance, where the top priority was how beautiful a person was on the outside.

~ *The Other Side of Life / Chapter 10*

\* \* \*

More to come, in time.

P.S. In *EyeLeash*, the characters do not drop “f-bombs” all over the place. Just at (9) opportune moments (cut down from 45—excerpt here contains 0).  $9 / 45 = 80\%$  reduction. 9 out of 65,000 words = 0.000138%. Much less than any high school setting IRL (in real life).

P.P.S. 1: *The Intern* and *TOSoL* are my first “mainstream” attempts. They were a bit strange/interesting for me to write, because I’m used to playing around and experimenting with words and different writing styles [though I try not to go overboard—the reader’s experience takes precedence over my satisfactions from wordplay].

As of May 2010, 1: *The Intern* is almost ready to go. I might make some tweaks to *TOSoL* (just a few more polishes, to “enhance” the setting/certain aspects of certain characters—I feel that it could be a little bit more special, that

way—perhaps I’m “under the influence” of Melville’s usage of imagery + literary symbolism)...I’ll try to get *TOSoL* done by the end of 2010.

P.P.P.S. There is enough pain, misery, and suffering in the world. I create the changes I would like to see, via writing (a blend of fact + fiction).

P.P.P.P.S. I realize that each of my books falls into a different genre. I don’t know if that’s a good or bad thing. To borrow a quote from a reader’s email to me: “‘organized clutter’ is my middle name.”

## **ESSAYS**

*(samples of my academic work/writing)*

*For my Spring 2010 semester at Adams State College, I signed up for 'ENG 490—Studies in Major Authors'—primarily because there were the least number of books on the reading list (not a good idea, if you want to be lazy/have less work to do). It was quite a shock initially, to tackle Herman Melville's work in-depth (I was more familiar with Moby's music than Moby Dick). The course and exams were one of the toughest I've ever had to do—but one of the best/most enjoyable also.*

*Included here are two essay assignments, regarding Melville's short story, "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," and his epic novel Moby Dick.*

### **Herman Melville Essay #1**

ENG 490: Studies in Major Authors  
March 4, 2010

"The Communist Manifesto" and "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids": A Comparison

Karl Marx's "The Communist Manifesto" and Herman Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" share the common theme of early industrial capitalism. While "The Communist Manifesto" is a concise outline of Marx's theory of historical materialism, where the primary purpose was to unify the divergent factors within the Central Committee of the Communist League (Bender 1), "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" is deeply critical of the capitalist mode of production; imagery

and characterization provide negative depictions of life in a capitalist society. The tone of Melville's story also conveys the narrator's attitude toward the societal changes he is observing.

In "The Communist Manifesto," Marx argues that capitalism's very success produces a constantly growing proletariat, which is forced by its dependent position to destroy capitalism and create socialism in its place. By withholding its labor, seizing the factories, and gaining control of the state, the proletariat would wrest power from the bourgeoisie, and establish a genuine democracy: the rule of the vast majority (Bender 9). Marx sees progress as coming about through the struggle for power between different social classes (Barry 157).

In "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," Melville sheds light on the societal changes that go along with industrialization. Melville's short story does not reflect Marx's vision of progress coming about through the struggle for power between different social classes. Instead, Melville questions industrialization by exploring these class divisions and the power relations within them, concluding that it results in an exploitative system. Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" expertly shows the interrelationship between the owners of the means of production (the bachelors) and the workers (the maids), and how it finally results in the oppression of the workers (Scoppettuolo 2). In Melville's story, the reality of human greed results in the separation of the classes; the system perpetuates, leaving the "proletariat" powerless to establish a true democracy, which would not favor the "bourgeoisie."

The exploitation of one social class by another is especially seen in modern industrial capitalism, particularly in its nineteenth-century form. The result of this exploitation is alienation, which is the state which comes about when the worker is 'deskilled' and made to perform fragmented, repetitive tasks in a sequence of whose nature and purpose he or she has no overall grasp. In Marx's major work, *Das Kapital*, the term 'reification' is used to describe the process these alienated workers have undergone, though the concept

is not developed in *Das Kapital* or “The Communist Manifesto.” Reification concerns the way capitalist goals and questions of profit and loss become paramount, which leaves workers bereft of their full humanity; the instance of industrial closures are calculated in purely economic terms. Essentially, people are reduced to mere commodities (Barry 157).

In “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids,” imagery in Melville’s tale conveys a critical stance toward the capitalist mode of production. Melville uses vivid imagery to describe ‘reification’—the process alienated workers have undergone. Machine and animal imagery is used throughout Melville’s text to describe the factory workers. The workers are described as “the girls (who) did not so much seem accessory wheels to the general machinery as mere cogs to the wheels” (Melville 1244). Later, they are referred to as being “like so many mares haltered to the rack” (1245). Melville writes:

...a tall girl (fed) the iron animal with half-quires of rose-hued note paper, which, at every downward dab of the piston-like machine, received in the corner the impress of a wreath of roses. I looked from the rosy paper to the pallid cheek, but said nothing. (1244)

In this poignant scene, life is symbolized by the rose-hue of the note paper, which contrasts with the “pallid cheek” of the female worker. The inanimate products have more life than the humans which are utilized to keep the machines running. The workplace setting is also described with much detail. “Not a syllable was breathed,” “the human voice was banished,” and “nothing was heard but the low, steady, overruling hum of the iron animals” (1244). Furthermore, the maids are depicted as being products of the machines they are enslaved to. Melville writes:

...the first girl’s brow...was young and fair; I looked upon the second girl’s brow, and saw it was ruled and wrinkled. Then, as I still looked, the two—for some small variety to the monotony—changed places; and where had stood the young, fair brow, now stood the ruled and wrinkled one. (1244)



These lines capture the detached connection and isolation that the workers are in. The fact that one of the girl's brows is "ruled" is significant—she is being tyrannized by the machine. The action which breaks the monotony—the switching of places between the younger and older worker—is also significant. It shows the blank, soulless future that awaits the younger worker.

Characterization is another literary element used by Melville to reveal a critical stance toward the capitalist mode of production. Melville's characterization in "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" provides negative depictions of life in a capitalist society. Melville writes of his dark-complexioned guide in the factory:

More tragical and more inscrutably mysterious than any mystic sight, human or machine, throughout the factory, was the strange innocence of cruel-heartedness in this usage-hardened boy. (1246)

The guide is indifferent to the plight of the factory workers, despite their silence and sadness. Of the workers, the narrator involuntarily bows in "some pained homage to (the girls') pale virginity" (1249). When he asks the dark-complexioned guide why the girls are always called girls, never women, the guide replies:

...the fact of their being generally unmarried—that's the reason, I should think...for our factory here, we will not have married women; they are apt to be off-and-on too much. We want none but steady workers: twelve hours to the day, day after day, through the three hundred and sixty-five days...and so, having no married women, what females we have are rightly enough called girls. (1246)

The "girls" have no chance of any other roles in life—mother, daughter, sister, friend, wife—apart from that of worker. The dehumanization effect of industrialization is reflected in the lack of love, joy, and sexuality, in the girls' lives as slaves to the machine.

Tone is the third literary element that Melville uses to present a critical stance toward the capitalist mode of production. The very title of "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" captures the tone of the narrator's

views on capitalism and industrialization. In Greek mythology, “Tartarus” refers to the lower region of the underworld. The maids are kept married to the machines, as having husbands or children would interfere with their work, which in turn, would affect the financial gains of the “bachelors,” the powerful upper class. The paper-mill where the maids work is located in a ravine that the country people called the “Devil’s Dungeon.” By using Heaven and Hell imagery and a narrative form that comprises of two parts to Melville’s tale, Melville shows the dominant ideology of capitalist culture.

The narrator of “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” ends the first half of the tale “with a burst of admiring candor” (1240). This contrasts with the last paragraph of the tale, where the narrator exclaims, “Oh! Paradise of Bachelors! and oh! Tartarus of Maids!” (1249). This exclamation indicates empathetic feelings for the mill workers. The narrator also rethinks his original position that the bachelor’s life is paradise when he sees the cost of their way of life—he sees how industrialization drives a wedge between society, leaving an extraordinarily wealthy higher class and an overworked, underpaid, dehumanized lower class (Scoppettuolo 8).

Karl Marx’s “The Communist Manifesto” outlines Marx’s theory of historical materialism, while Melville’s “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” reveals a critical stance on the capitalist mode of production. Melville exposes this stance by utilizing literary elements such as imagery, characterization, and tone. The narrator’s observations, the lack of empathy shown towards the factory workers, and the obvious opposition between the upper and lower classes all evoke a critical stance to capitalism. The people who hold lower socioeconomic status are depicted as oppressed, whereas the motivations of the upper class are depicted in a negative light. This shows that Herman Melville was critical of capitalism, and “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” shows his examination of the effect that this has upon the structure of society.

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## Herman Melville Essay #2

*My essay on Moby Dick.*

ENG 490: Studies in Major Authors  
April 29, 2010

### *Moby-Dick*: Battling the Bonds of Religion

At war with Christian theology and practice, Melville's literature constitutes "an antireligious domain of subversive indictment against a god who has failed man and whose absence has generated a modern voice of recrimination and alienation" (Franchot, 2008). *Moby-Dick* is pervasively characterized by Melville's battle with his religion, Christianity. Inner turmoil, as well as anger and contempt towards the Christian concept of God, is prompted by the impossibility of reconciling the conflict between Christianity and concepts such as religious relativism and homosexuality. Throughout the story of *Moby-Dick*, Melville masterfully utilizes the literary elements of tone, characterization, and literary symbolism to reveal to his readers the extent of his inner conflict and contempt with Christianity.

*Moby-Dick* begins with the narrator introducing himself with the line, "Call Me Ishmael" (Melville 18). This striking, seemingly simple line, immediately confronts the reader with the figure of the rejected outcast, the alienated man (Porter 15). In the Bible, "Ishmael"—the oldest son of the patriarch Abraham—was cast away from Abraham's home at the age of thirteen, because Abraham's wife wanted their younger son Isaac to be the heir. Herman Melville's lack of acceptance in his life caused himself to identify with the biblical figure of Ishmael (Humford 25). Melville was twelve and a half (about the same age of the biblical Ishmael when he was made an outcast) when his father died following hardships and a bout of insanity. In addition, Melville was rejected by his mother,

who favored her first son. “Most of the action is seen through the eyes of Ishmael. He represents the author’s ego” (Edinger 10).

Through Ishmael, Melville reveals his views on religious relativism. Upon arrival at the crowded Spouter-Inn, Ishmael is initially doubtful and apprehensive on having to share a room with Queequeg, the “wild cannibal” (35). A short while after Ishmael first meets Queequeg, Ishmael realizes that Queequeg “has just as much reason to fear me, as I have to be afraid of him. Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian...I turned in, and never slept better in my life” (36). Melville takes a jab at Christianity by considering a sober cannibal to be more civilized than a drunken Christian—the fact that Ishmael never had a better night of sleep proves the narrator’s intuition to be correct. Melville questions the notion that Christians are better humans than ‘cannibals’, as was the accepted thought during his time (and even today). This hints at his inner battle with the teachings of Christianity of his day, one of which preaches that only Christians can attain eternal salvation.

In a particularly poignant scene, Ishmael wonders about the meaning of God when he sees Queequeg worshipping a small idol named Yojo. “But what is worship?” thinks Ishmael. “Do you suppose...that the magnanimous God of heaven and earth...can possibly be jealous of an insignificant bit of black wood?...to do to my fellow man what I would have my fellow man do to me—*that* is the will of God” (57). Ishmael goes on to say, “And what do I wish that this Queequeg would do to me? Why, unite with me in my particular Presbyterian form of worship. Consequently, I must then unite with him in his; ergo, I must turn idolator” (57). Ishmael’s questions are blasphemous, according to Exodus 20.3-5: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me...For I the Lord thy God am a jealous god.” Here, Melville defies religion, by suggesting that all religions are valid, which runs contrary to the orthodox Christian view where Christianity is the one and only true religion.

As the story progresses, the reader can sense an

increasing intensity in Melville's inner turmoil with his religious upbringing. Through the voice of Ishmael, Melville continues exploring religious relativism, and questioning if Christianity guarantees salvation. Through Ishmael, Melville compares Queequeg's ancestry to that of Christians and says that "even Christians could be both miserable and wicked; infinitely more so, than (Queequeg's) father's heathens" (60). Ishmael suggests that "...good Presbyterian Christians should be charitable...and not fancy (themselves) so vastly superior to other mortals, pagans and what not, because of their half-crazy conceits on (the subject of religious obligations)" (79). On the other hand, Queequeg merely looks at Ishmael "with a sort of condescending concern and compassion, as though he thought it a great pity that such a sensible young man should be so hopelessly lost to evangelical pagan piety" (83). Melville tries to show the parallels of different religious customs and traditions, and calls to question why one should be considered righteous and not the other.

As the plot unfolds, Melville's religious conflict deepens. One issue he battles with is homosexuality, which to a strict Christian would be considered sinful. Homosexual acts lead to eternal damnation, according to Leviticus 18:22: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination." The interactions between Ishmael and the savage, Queequeg, contain many elements of homoeroticism and homosexuality, such as when Ishmael awakes during the night to "unlock (Queequeg's) bride-groom clasp," before loudly expostulating to Queequeg about the "unbecomingness of his hugging a fellow male in that matrimonial sort of style" (38). Since Ishmael represents Melville's ego, the interactions between Ishmael and Queequeg can be taken as Melville's approval of such connections, which run contrary to the Puritanical conscience of Melville's time.

Ishmael is initially uncomfortable being in the company of Queequeg "minus (Queequeg's) trousers" (38). When Queequeg presses his forehead against Ishmael's, and tells Ishmael that they are "bosom friends," Ishmael privately

notes that “in a countryman, this sudden flame of friendship would have seemed...a thing to be much distrusted; but in this simple savage those old rules would not apply” (56). Shortly thereafter, Ishmael discloses to the reader that he and Queequeg lie on the bed as “a cosy, loving pair” (57). On one humorous occasion, Melville jokes that in Queequeg’s rolling and swaying on the whale and in Ishmael’s jerking him with the rope, Queequeg shows off more than his legs to the appreciative Ishmael (255). Melville is comparing the relative ease with which a non-Christian can accept such male companionship, whereas to a Christian it would be seen as detestable and sinful.

While Melville uses the character of Ishmael to verbalize his dilemmas with religious concepts of worship and homosexuality, he uses the character of Captain Ahab to vent his anger with the hypocrisy of Christianity and his contempt for God, whom he believes will punish him for his homosexual urges which he cannot contain. This rage against God is evident early in the story of *Moby-Dick* and summarized in Father Mapple’s sermon on Jonah, in Chapter 9. “And if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves,” the pastor proclaims (49). Father Mapple goes on to describe “true and faithful repentance,” which is “not clamorous for pardon, but grateful for punishment” (52). Obviously, Melville does not accept that teaching and in his story, Captain Ahab is the complete opposite of Jonah. Captain Ahab does not repent. He is anything but grateful for the punishment of having lost his limb.

Captain Ahab represents the angry, revengeful Melville. Captain Ahab is described as remaining “invisibly enshrined within his cabin” (93), and being the “supreme lord and dictator” (107). Ahab is the captain of the Pequod ship; Ahab thinks he is God, and thus capable of facing Moby-Dick. Melville uses Ahab to represent himself as a writer—it is through writing that he feels he is God, and thus capable of fully exploring and navigating through the aspects of his own self, a large component being his anger and hostility toward the Christian religion. “Moody stricken Ahab (stands) before (the ship’s crew) with a crucifixion in his face; in all the

nameless regal overbearing dignity of some mighty woe” (109). This “mighty woe” could well be inferred as Melville’s underlying homosexuality, which though unproven to this day, is highly probable due to the frequent sexual allusions and symbolism in his literary works, most notably in the homoerotically-charged short story, “Billy Budd, Sailor.” The reader is also told that Ahab “piled upon the whale’s white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart’s shell upon it” (156).

Through Ahab’s interactions with Gabriel and Starbuck, the reader is clued in on the theme of blasphemy. “Think, think of the blasphemer—dead, and down there!—beware of the blasphemer’s end!” (253). Gabriel warns that Ahab, like Mayhew, will go to hell for the blasphemy of attacking Moby-Dick. Blasphemy was an extremely sensitive topic in the Melville house, for Herman Melville’s father, as chief justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, a decade earlier had become the last judge to sentence someone to jail for blasphemy (253). Similarly, Starbuck cries out to Ahab:

“Never, never wilt thou capture him, old man—In Jesus’ name no more of this, that’s worse than devil’s madness...thy very leg once more snatched from under thee...all good angels mobbing thee with warnings...Shall we keep chasing this murderous fish till he swamps the last man? Shall we be dragged by him to the bottom of the sea? Shall we be towed by him to the infernal world? Oh, oh,—Impiety and blasphemy to hunt him more!” (418).

Thus, Melville masterfully utilizes the literary elements of tone and characterization (especially through Ishmael and Ahab), to help his readers understand his innermost conflict with religion.

Melville also uses powerful literary symbolism, to convey his thoughts and attitudes towards Christianity in *Moby-Dick*. One of the most telling forms of symbolism is “the barbaric white leg upon which (Captain Ahab) partly stood...this ivory leg had at sea been fashioned from the polished bone of the sperm whale’s jaw” (109). The ivory leg



is a symbol of being directly maimed and crippled by God. Christians believe God is their maker, and Melville feels that God has made him to have homosexual tendencies, which have burdened him all his life. God is represented by Moby-Dick. Ahab declares “Moby Dick (as) not only ubiquitous, but immortal” (155). Ahab says, “It was Moby Dick that dismasted me; Moby Dick that brought me to this dead stump I stand on now...it was that accursed white whale that razeed me; made a poor pegging lubber of me for ever and a day!” (139).

Ahab also says, “Is, then, the crown too heavy that I wear? this Iron Crown of Lombardy...all loveliness is anguish to me, since I can ne’er enjoy. Gifted with the high perception, I lack the low, enjoying power; damned, most subtly and most malignantly!” (143). The Iron Crown refers to the crown used at the coronation of the Holy Roman emperors, said to contain a nail from the cross on which Jesus was crucified. This signifies a heavy burden to bear, like the cross Jesus had to carry.

The whiteness of the whale reflects the hypocrisy of Christianity. Ishmael muses that “Nature absolutely paints like the harlot, whose allurements cover nothing but the charnel-house within...so the wretched infidel gazes himself blind at the monumental white shroud that wraps all the prospect around him. And of all these things the Albino whale (is) the symbol. Wonder ye then at the fiery hunt?” (165). Nature’s beauty is taken as the mere cosmetic of an inwardly dead prostitute or the paint of a godless universe (165).

Ishmael says, “I snuffed up that uncontaminated aroma...while bathing in that bath, I felt divinely free from all ill-will, or petulance, or malice, of any sort whatsoever” (322). Through Ishmael’s actions of squeezing spermaceti and friends’ hands, Melville puts forth his personal notion that there is nothing tainted about homosexuality—the male’s ejaculate is a substance that is purer than pure. Ishmael also goes on to say:

“Squeeze! squeeze! squeeze! all the morning long; I squeezed that sperm till I myself almost melted into

it...Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget; that at last I was continually squeezing (their) hands, and looking up into their eyes sentimentally...let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness" (322).

The homoerotic, mutually masturbatory ritual makes Ishmael feel "divinely free from all ill-will, or petulance, or malice, of any sort whatsoever" (322).

Melville's conflict with Christianity reaches a peak in *Moby-Dick* when Ahab howls, "Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!" as "the malignant iron scorchingly (devours) the baptismal blood" (372). Translated, the above line means, "I do not baptize you in the name of the father, but in the name of the devil." This is the ultimate form of blasphemy. When a person becomes a Christian he or she is baptized with water in the name of God, water signifying cleansing. Here, Captain Ahab baptizes in the name of 'the devil', and instead of water he uses 'blood'. At this point Ahab establishes himself as the Anti-Christ, symbolized by his determination to destroy Moby-Dick. "Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee" (426).

And yet, Ahab does not succeed in destroying Moby-Dick. Instead, "Retribution, swift vengeance, eternal malice were in (the whale's) whole aspect, and spite of all that mortal man could do, the solid white buttress of his forehead smote the ship's starboard bow, till men and timbers reeled" (425). Melville shows that God is vengeful and without mercy. The ship is consumed by the ocean in "one vortex," which carries "the smallest chip of the Pequod out of sight" (426). Yet, Moby-Dick spares one man, Ishmael, who lives to tell the tale. How Ishmael survives is significant. He is saved by the coffin that was made for the cannibal, the same coffin that was earlier used as a life-buoy, which made Ahab say, "Here now's the very dreaded symbol of grim death, by a mere hap, made the expressive sign of the help and hope of most

endangered life. A life-buoy of a coffin!” (396). Now, at the end of it all, the coffin saves Ishmael. He says that he was “buoyed up by that coffin, for almost one whole day and night, I floated on a soft and dirgelike main” (427).

The novel ends with the ultimate spite to God—Ishmael (and Melville, through the narrative association) survives, despite God’s wrath, symbolized by the destruction Moby-Dick wields. Moby-Dick represents God, who is all-loving, according to Christian doctrine, and who smites anyone that dares to oppose him. In the end, it is through a supposedly uncivilized and “pagan” savage, that Ishmael’s life is spared. Does this not make the wild savage look more charitable and kind than the conventional orthodox Christian concept of God himself? And yet, the coffin can also be seen as a symbol of hope, of resurrection from the dead. Could Melville mean that even non-Christians can be saved, and ultimately could he be saved despite his human transgressions, including his homosexuality? Even at the very end, it appears that Melville is still battling the bonds of his religion.

*Moby-Dick* characterizes Melville’s battle with Christianity. Inner turmoil, as well as anger and contempt towards the Christian concept of God, is prompted by the impossibility of reconciling the conflict between Christianity, and concepts such as religious relativism and homosexuality. Melville masterfully utilizes the literary elements of tone and characterization, to express his caustic sentiments on the seeming hypocrisy in Christianity. Melville also uses powerful literary symbolism to convey his constant battle with his religion via the timeless classic, *Moby-Dick*.

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## The POE Essay

*Edgar Allan Poe is one of my favorite writers of all time, so I naturally chose to write about him/his works for the final paper in one of my classes.*

*While I chose to write about “The Raven” and “The Tell-Tale Heart,” I first got hooked onto Poe’s work when I read the following line from his story, “MS. Found in a Bottle”:*

*“My companion spoke of the lightness of our cargo, and reminded me of the excellent qualities of our ship; but I could not help feeling the utter hopelessness of hope itself, and prepared myself gloomily for that death which I thought nothing could defer beyond an hour.”*

ENG 210: Study of Literature  
November 11, 2009

### “The Raven” and “The Tell-Tale Heart”: A Comparison

“The Raven” and “The Tell-Tale Heart” are among the most celebrated and well-known of Edgar Allan Poe’s literary works. “The Raven” combines two ideas, of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and of a Raven continuously repeating the word “Nevermore.” With the Raven’s reply to the lover’s final demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world, the poem reaches its completion.

“The Tell-Tale Heart” is narrated by a murderer, who says that he is going to tell a story in which he will defend his sanity yet confess to having killed an old man. His motivation is a paranoid fear of the man’s pale blue eye. He conceals the crime perfectly—placing the old man’s dismembered corpse beneath the floorboards—but ends up confessing to the policemen. The narrator panics into thinking that the police must hear the sound of the old man’s

beating heart, and thus know of his guilt.

These two works showcase Poe's intense faculty for abstract and technical beauty and share a common theme in probing the dark recesses of the human mind with great skill and insight developed primarily through rhythmic effects, tone, form, images, and symbolism, reinforcing Poe's statement "that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul" (Poe, "Preface" Par. 1).

Poe shows, through the tone of these two works, a great attention to the details of an abstract beauty. *A Handbook to Literature* defines tone as, "the attitudes toward the subject and toward the audience implied in a literary work"(520). The tone of "The Raven" is one of sadness. Poe explains:

Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones. (Poe 554)

In "The Raven," Poe writes of a grief-stricken man who has seemed to have lost touch with reality. Gothic details like the dying embers and the raven's eerie presence create a somber setting. Other details contributing to the melancholic tone include the time of year—the "bleak December" (Poe 618)—doubt, and the unbroken silence of the darkness. Poe's intent is to take the reader beyond the normal, everyday, rational world and into the darker recesses of the human soul (Bailey Par. 6).

The tone of "The Tell-Tale Heart" is one of paranoia, guilt, and fear. It contains "internalized elements of anxiety and fear pushed to an unrelenting extreme" (Parini 269). As the story progresses, the guilt of the brilliant master-mind of a perfect murder overshadows the sane demeanor and results in the confession of the murder. The first person perspective helps the reader to get into the mind of this severely disturbed narrator. With "The Tell-Tale Heart," the atmosphere and tone create terror because the reader is forced to look at an unattractive side of mankind—namely a murdering madman, which could very well be a next door neighbor, friend, or co-worker.

Poe shows, through "The Raven" and "The Tell-Tale

Heart,” a great attention to the details of technical beauty. The poet has a remarkable awareness of the effects of rhythmic patterns. *A Handbook to Literature* mentions that “the presence of rhythmic patterns (in prose and poetry) lends both pleasure and heightened emotional response” (447). In his 1850 essay “The Philosophy of Composition,” Poe writes about the rhythmical effect of “The Raven.” The rhythm is trochaic, while the meter is octameter acatalectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic repeated in the refrain of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrameter catalectic (Poe 559). The word “Nevermore” is the refrain in “The Raven”—to Poe, the refrain’s pleasure is solely deduced from the sense of identity and repetition (Poe 555). Poe wanted the nature of the refrain to be brief, and the character of the word to be sonorous.

“The Tell-Tale Heart,” in comparison, reads like a modern, tautly written psychological story (Stern 289). While it does not feature a similarly strict rhythmic form as applied in “The Raven,” other literary devices function in this story of guilt and conscience. *A Handbook to Literature* defines repetition as, “(the) reiteration of a word, sound, phrase, or idea” (438). Repetition is also recognized as an important element in narratives (439). “The Tell-Tale Heart” is a first-person narrative; while there is no refrain like the word “Nevermore” in “The Raven,” the repetition of key phrases and images throughout the text of “The Tell-Tale Heart” builds up the tension. The old man’s eye is an image that appears several times throughout the story—his eye is described as “the eye of a vulture” (Poe 290), the “Evil Eye” (Poe 291), and “no human eye—not even *his*” (Poe 294) could have detected the murder having taken place in the old man’s room. The beating of the old man’s heart is first described as being “a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton” (Poe 293). This exact same phrase is repeated when the narrator is talking to the police—it adds a phantasmical quality to the plot, and is a chilling reminder of the crime the narrator has committed.

Despite the fact that the literary forms differ (“The Raven” is a 108-lined poem that features rhyme schemes,

while “The Tell-Tale Heart” is a short story), it is through the form of these two works, that Poe also shows his great attention to the details of technical beauty. Poe had a preference for brief, concise formats, so that the soul of the reader was rendered at his control (Poe 566). Poe considered that the highest literary genius could be best displayed “in the composition of a rhymed poem not to exceed in length what might be perused in an hour” (Poe 565). The next best class of composition next to such a poem as he suggested, would be the brief prose tale. He writes that the writer of the prose tale may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression, which are antagonistical to the nature of the poem.

“The Tell-Tale Heart” is an almost perfect illustration of Poe’s theory of the short story. As defined by Arthur Hobson Quinn, Poe’s theory of the short story is a narrative, short and to the point, with every word contributing to the central effect. The central effect of “The Tell-Tale Heart” combines the narrator’s previous terrors, the old man’s current terrors, and the terrors for the narrator yet to come. No word is wasted in “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and therefore affirms the theory of the short story as held by Poe (Quinn 394). Thus, via the brief, short story format of “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and the 108-lined poem “The Raven,” Poe is enabled to carry out his full intended artistic design without interruption, as compared to a longer piece of work which could not be read at one sitting.

Poe uses images and symbols to illustrate the darker aspects of human nature, including themes like horror, death, and the tormented soul. Both “The Raven” and “The Tell-Tale Heart” utilize a plethora of symbolism, to add worth to the quality and depth of the literary works.

The raven itself in “The Raven” is one of the most obvious symbols in the poem. The raven is an ominous symbol—the black bird is “grim, ungainly, ghastly, (and) gaunt,” an image which suits the dark, eerie setting of the poem (Poe 621). The image also coincides with that of a foreboding prophet. The raven can also be seen as a symbol of eternal unrest. The narrator is not brought the most of the luxury of sorrow,



since the raven's reply is "nevermore" to the narrator's final demand if his soul shall ever meet with his mistress's again (Poe 563). Another obvious symbol is the bust of Pallas. Pallas is also known as Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom (Stebbins Par. 1). The raven could have decided to perch on the goddess of wisdom, because it would lead the narrator to believe that the raven spoke from wisdom, and was not just repeating its only "stock and store," and to signify the scholarship of the narrator (Poe 621). The chamber in which the narrator is positioned, is used to signify the loneliness of the man, and the sorrow he feels for the loss of Lenore. The tempest outside, is used to even more signify the isolation of this man, to show a sharp contrast between the calmness in the chamber and the tempestuous night (Hallqvist Par. 6).

"The Tell-Tale Heart" features images and symbols to explore the dark recesses of the human mind as well. The killer betrays himself through sheer perverseness and confesses his guilt. It is a tale of conscience—the respectable Mr. Poe was troubled by his other, darker self, and the conflict is mirrored in this story (Stern 288). The story features an eye as a prominent image, the eye being a symbol of watchfulness, censure, and a reminder of guilt (Stern 289). The style that Poe uses to relate "The Tell-Tale Heart" incorporates the elements of terrors and obsessions; yet they also symbolize the incomprehensible terrors and obsessions that Poe as the author must have lived through to be able to formulate such an account. Perhaps this is why Poe considered "The Tell-Tale Heart" one of his best works (Quinn 430). There can also be a symbolic link between the old man and Poe's adoptive father in real life, John Allan, and between the narrator in the story and Poe. There are several similarities between the old man and Allan. Both men had blue eyes. Much like the old man had never wronged the narrator, Allan had never wronged Poe. Similarities abound between Poe and the narrator as well—neither had a wish for riches, and they both behaved affectionately to their counterpart's face, even though they despised him behind his back. The story could well have been an outlet for Poe's pent-up aggression toward his

adoptive father (Bonaparte 497).

Poe addresses the theme of the tormented soul in these two literary works, which reinforces his statement “that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul.” Poe’s writings are a reflection of the inner turmoil that was destroying him, and the fact that themes like pain, cruelty, premature burial, and the corruption of the grave (expressions of the death wish) were an obsession with Poe, shows how strong was the hold that the desire for self-destruction had upon him (Stern xxxvi).

In “The Raven,” Poe explores the theme of the tormented soul via the tragic death of a beautiful woman at a young age, and the grief of the bereft young man whose affection for his lost love transcends the physical boundaries of death and life. In “The Raven,” the ebony bird stands as the embodiment of grief caused by loneliness and separation, referencing not only Poe’s fascination with the imagery of young lovers wrenched from one another by death, but also the pain he experienced at a very young age with the untimely death of his mother. Later critics have also examined motifs in the work—especially the virginal, alabaster-skinned woman idealized in death and the sinister black creature who appears in the dark of night—from the perspective of race and class issues in the United States during the generations preceding the Civil War (Sisler Par. 4).

In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the narrator plans, executes and conceals the crime; however, what has been hidden within the self will not stay concealed. The theme of the tortured soul is addressed once again. The narrator speaks of an illness that has heightened the senses: “Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heavens and in the earth. I heard many things in hell.” (Poe 290). The narrator repeatedly insists that he is not mad; however the reader soon realizes that the fear of the vulture eye has consumed the narrator, who has now become a victim to the madness which he had hoped to elude (Womack Par. 23). In the same sense, “The Tell-Tale Heart” is a study of terror and internal conflict. It can be surmised that the intense picture

of terror was so graphic because the narrator himself suffered causeless terrors in the night. It can be further inferred that the narrator has a deep sympathy for the old man, even though the narrator is scheming to kill the old man (Quinn 394). Poe formulates the story so that the madman narrator paints a vivid and remarkable picture of the fright of his victim:

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no!—it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night...the terrors distracted me. (Poe 292)

“The Raven” and “The Tell-Tale Heart” are generally accepted as two of Edgar Allan Poe’s most characteristic works in theme, tone, and execution. They clearly showcase why Poe is highly regarded for his inspired, original imagination and supremely deft command of language. Poe is the most often read of all his contemporaries, which is no accident, for his ideas were far in advance of his age (Stern xvi). He knew how to create suspense before the psycho-thriller was thought of, and was endlessly concerned with inner conflict—a major theme of contemporary literature. “The Raven” and “The Tell-Tale Heart” are two fine examples of Poe’s tapping into the rich reservoir of the subconscious mind, to set free the strange and terrible images which had seldom been allowed to stalk the printed page, until he introduced them into his work (Stern xxxviii).

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## The Shakespeare (Short) Essay

*I've liked Shakespeare for quite some time—my favorite plays are Macbeth, Hamlet, and King Lear.*

ENG 403: Shakespeare  
February 25, 2010

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM  
(Translating Shakespeare into Modern English)

### HELENA

How happy some o'er other some can be!  
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.  
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;  
He will not know what all but he do know.  
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes  
So I, admiring of his qualities.  
Things base and vile, holding no quantity,  
Love can transpose to form and dignity.  
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;  
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind.  
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste;  
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste;  
And therefore is Love said to be a child,  
Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd. (1.2.227-239)

### Translation:

Happiness is relative. It doesn't matter that the people of Athens think I am just as good as Hermia, because Demetrius doesn't share their views. I make the mistake of admiring him, just as he blunders with unrequited love and attention from Hermia. Love can transform even the most loathsome and insidious of deeds into something that's tangible and respectable. Love is a product of the

imagination, not reality, which explains why Cupid is depicted as being blind. Love does not know reason, works on impulse, with childlike naivety in its selection of the pairing of lovers.

**Commentary:**

This passage of Shakespeare's loses much in translation. Certain words create a poetic subtlety and nuance—the word 'transpose,' for example. In classical music, transposition refers to shifting a musical composition to a different key. 'Transpose' can also be defined as to render something into another language, style, or manner of expression. In comparison, the word 'transform' implies a major change in form, nature, or function. I think that the word 'transform' sounds more clinical, as compared to 'transpose'—the association the word has with classical music also adds to the mood and setting of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The word 'beguil'd' gives the image of trickery, 'beguiled' being defined as to lead by deception. I believe this is an excellent word choice (a pun, in fact) as it goes in line with some of the main plot elements of the play. This element of trickery is evident when Puck plays Cupid and anoints Lysander's eyes (instead of Demetrius's), as well as when Puck (following the orders of his master, Oberon) creates mischief between Titania and Bottom.

Rhythm is sacrificed in a modern translation of the above passage. The original passage is written in rhyming couplets, and in the form of iambic pentameter (beginning with unstressed and ending with stressed syllables). Each line of the verse has ten syllables. The presence of rhythmic patterns lends both pleasure and heightened emotional response, because it establishes a pattern of expectations and rewards the listener or reader with the pleasure of a series of fulfillments of expectation. Rhyme serves to unify and distinguish divisions of a poem, because it is likely that the rhyme sounds followed in one stanza will be changed when the next stanza is started, although the rhyme scheme remains the same. This gives unity to one stanza and marks it off as separate from the next, giving a sense of flow and

movement. The rhyming couplets in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* also give visual appeal to the verses—typographically, the reader experiences a sense of unity upon looking at the text. Beauty in the poetic sense is completely stripped away with the removal of the rhyming scheme and rhythm that this Shakespearian passage consists of.

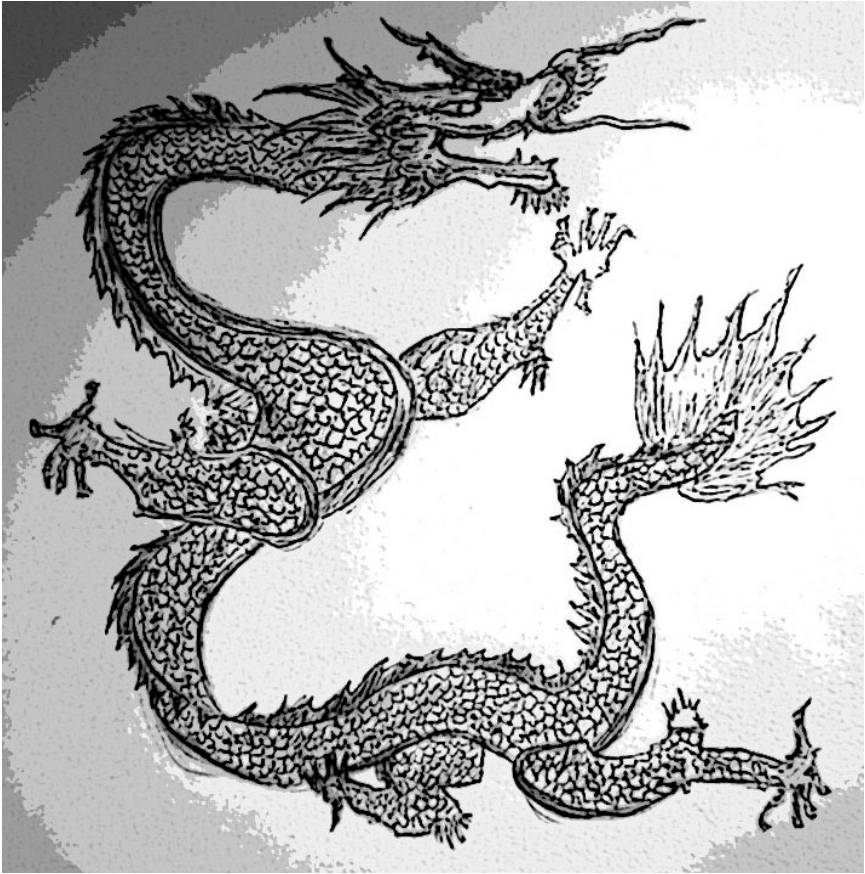
In the dramatic context, I feel that the element of fantasy and enchantment is lost in translation, which is a significant loss, considering the play's title. For instance, the modern-day depictions of Cupid tend to be of a more commercial and superficial nature—he is the chubby, winged archer, perhaps most commonly seen on cards and gifts related to (the highly commercialized) Valentine's day. In the context of the play, Puck literally brings the mythical Cupid to life. In classical mythology, Cupid is the child of Aphrodite/Venus, the goddess of Love. Classical mythology is woven as a sub-theme in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—I believe this sub-theme enhances the theme of love in the play, and Shakespeare's point on Love as a universal theme. Love transforms ordinary people into rare and perfect beings, and when people fall in love, they suspend reason and overlook the flaws in their beloved. The bottom line is that nothing is more dream-like than Love, which is a point Shakespeare captures perfectly, in terms of style, structure, and substance, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



## **SKETCHES**

*I always used to daydream about publishing a book with my poems + sketches. I started drawing late, when I was around 16-17 years old.*

*As with writing, I am self-taught. There's just more freedom that way...*



## **I. Eastern Dragon, 2010**

I wanted to build my first website when I was 12—there was no better subject than dragons. To me, the dragon is freedom & forever (and power, grace, strength, passion, focus, intelligence...)

P.S. Check out [www.dragonsinn.net](http://www.dragonsinn.net) when you have some time to spare ;)



## **II. Flowers (ink + watercolor), 2003**

I didn't have paintbrushes at the time, so I used my index finger to smudge the gradients.



**III. Novan Chang (bassist/male protagonist  
from *EyeLeash: A Blog Novel*), 2009**

This was carefully drawn in mechanical pencil. I like using mechanical pencil and ballpoint pens the most.



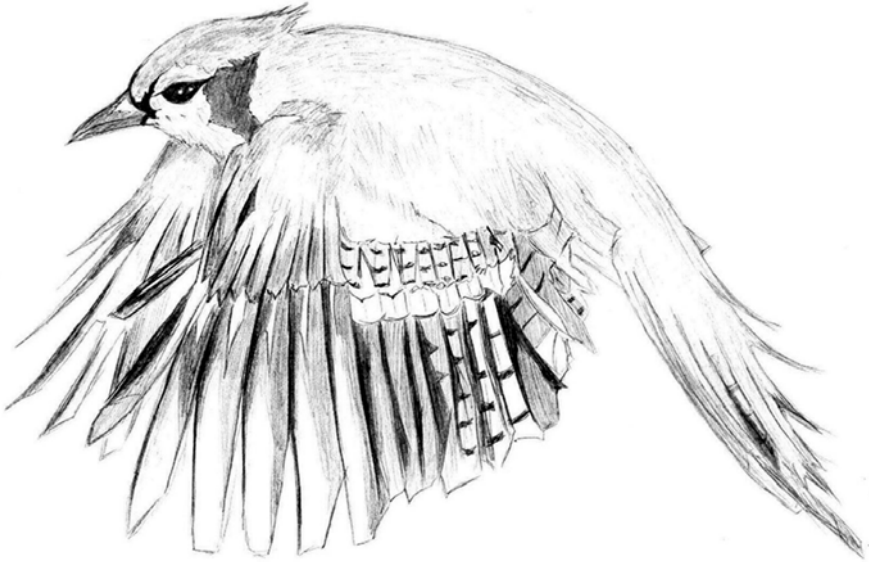
#### **IV. Pants, 2004**

Inspiration: a photo in a fashion/women's magazine.



## **V. Converse, 2004**

One of my favorite shoes!



**VI. Blue Jay, 2005**



**VII. Girl dreaming with coffee, 2004**



**VIII. Edgar Allan Poe, 2003**

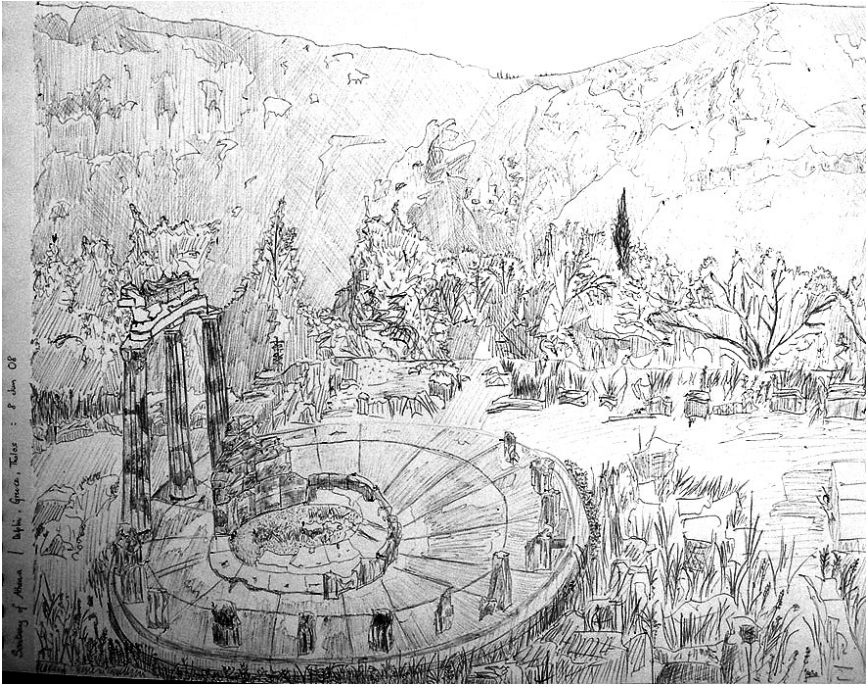
The one and only.





### **IX. Gemma Ward, 2006**

Pencil + Photoshop filter [cutout].  
Reference: *Vogue*, December 06.



## **X. Sanctuary of Athena, 2008**

This took quite a long time to do / in ballpoint pen.



## **XI. Hummingbird, 2007**

I've always liked sketching/drawing/painting birds.



**XII. Bird, 2009**

Ballpoint pen.

## **[AUTHOR Q&A]**

*The following interview was originally published on 16 July 2009, courtesy of RCGNTN Magazine.*

### **Q: Who is Jess C Scott and what does she do?**

A: Jess identifies herself primarily as a writer. She writes books, and is ever working towards eventual success.

### **Q: When did your fascination with words start?**

A: Long, long ago. I think I stapled a few pieces of paper together, and drew some pictures to a story titled “The Three Robbers” when I was 5 or 6. I liked feeling I could travel to another place, and/or be whoever I wanted to be—anytime, anywhere.

### **Q: What do words mean to you?**

A: DNA. Seriously, because whatever I want to say is all in my work. Writing is more than stringing a bunch of letters/words/sentences to me—the effort and dedication to the craft requires both my time and my life (they’re not really mutually exclusive).

### **Q: Where is your favorite place to write?**

A: Anywhere I can zone out and be left alone, uninterrupted.

**Q: I’ve read your pieces you’ve provided on your website, and they mostly seem very provocative and slightly exhibitionistic. Is that part of your personality or are you writing based on pure fantasy?**

A: A mixture of the two, I suppose ;)

I enjoy looking at things from different perspectives, particularly if there's sex + intimacy involved. In such stories, the point-of-view could be from a straight guy/gay male/lesbian. I can't really be \*all\* of those at the same time, in real life. However, since Imagination is where I reside a lot of the time...

**Q: You also have a book called *EyeLeash*, which you describe as an experimental coming-of-age novel. What can we expect from it that will surprise us?**

A: A sensitivity + awareness of the details, of the blog/IM format.

A raw honesty which is likely to be too "controversial" for mainstream commercial establishments.

A soul-searching component that is universal and unique at the same time.

Oh and there's a lead Asian guy—Novan Chang. I don't know of very many Asians in contemporary and young adult literature.

**Q: What else are you busy with presently?**

A: I'll be publishing/marketing another book later in the year (as well as "continuing on a degree"). I've been fiddling around with Kindle (Amazon's wireless e-reader).

Converting a .doc file to a format supported by Kindle involves more trickery than it sounds. I'm coming up with some concepts for future book trailers (for my next novel)—which means a bunch of illustrations have got to be done!

**Q: Some people write based on their life experiences and others write as a form of escapism. Which category do you think you fall under?**

A: Again, a combination of the two. There is no greater substitute for experience, 'tis true. However, seeing beyond mundane reality is always nice too.

**Q: Do you think doing commercialized writing is equivalent to selling your soul to the devil?**

A: I worry about the implications this might have on me financially—but yes, I do think doing commercial writing is equivalent to selling one’s soul (to each their own; I can only speak for myself). I must always have some regard for artistic/literary merit, social value, etc., in a story or book, if I’m going to be writing it.

**Q: Any last words?**

A: Don’t give up on your dreams. It’s very difficult, but nothing’s better than doing something you really want for yourself, by yourself, and as yourself.



### **About the author:**

Jess writes edgy/contemporary fiction, and is an English/Business senior at Adams State College.

About *Porcelain*, she says, “I had a decade’s worth of short stories, poems, and oddball sketches sitting around in various files and folders. I decided to showcase some of them in a novella. I thought it’d make a neat addition to my (ever-expanding) volume of written works.”

Jess would like to try out copywriting, and teaching ESL, some time in the near future. She is currently working on some outlines for a “seven deadly sins” series (and two other urban fantasy projects). She enjoys the speed and efficiency



of indie publishing, and thanks you for your support of indie authors.

**Jess's books are available at:**

[Amazon](#)  
[Smashwords](#)  
[Mobipocket](#)  
[B & N](#)  
[Google Books](#)

**Connect with Jess Online:**

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/jesscscott](http://www.facebook.com/jesscscott)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/jesscscott](http://www.twitter.com/jesscscott)

Website: [www.jesscscott.com](http://www.jesscscott.com)

E-mail: [missfey@gmail.com](mailto:missfey@gmail.com)

**If you enjoyed *Porcelain...***

Please tell two friends who you think might enjoy it too :)

Thanks!

P.S. And feel free to let me see your thoughts via a review, or by email.

[missfey@gmail.com](mailto:missfey@gmail.com)

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