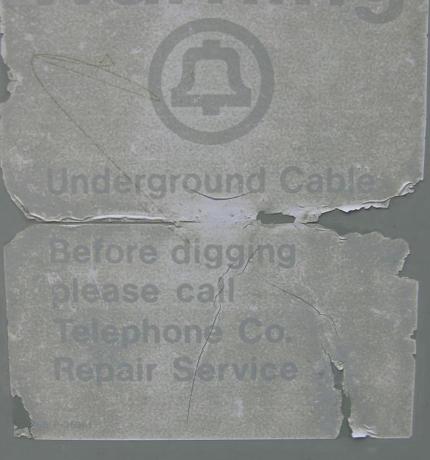
### BLACK RABBIT MAGAZINE ISSUE 1









Memory New York Apathy

### FICTION

DIGGING OUT THE OLD DIGITAL ARCHEOLOGY

### POETRY

Dixie To The Next Gentleman In Line Campus Pinecone Words Three Flies



CREDITS

# ESSAYS

3



# MEMORY

I WAS BORN IN CALIFORNIA -- the Bay Area, to be a little less general; Fremont, to get more concrete; Kaiser Hospital in Hayward to be amusingly exact -- but after spending my adolescence in Colorado I consider it to be where I'm from. Colorado, the healthiest state in the nation, the only one as of this writing with an obesity rate beneath 20%, and one of the most beautiful, in my opinion.

Does anyone think where they live isn't beautiful on some level? Maybe people who delight in selfdeprecation, or live in New Jersey, or outside a landfill (although there are plenty of beautiful things about landfills, discounting the smell).

"Well, at least we've got the beach."

"You should see the fields in late summer. Gold as far as

the eyes can see."

"If the wind's going just right, you almost forget it's there."

Fremont was the union of a bunch of smaller cities into one larger city. When the unification occurred, each city voted on it. One city, Newark, refused to join, and so the city is in fact donut shaped; Newark is completely contained within Fremont. My grandmother lives there still, down a side street about a block away from the train tracks. She had moved to the house after my grandfather passed away less than a year after I was born, a massive heart attack in his arm chair in Oregon.

San Francisco's last major earthquake happened when I was three, the Loma Prieta earthquake. It's best known as being the one everyone saw on television, because it happened right before the third game of the World Series that year between the A's and the Giants. A piece of the double-decker Bay Bridge collapsed, which I hazily remember seeing on TV. Somewhere, I have a baseball card commemorating the event.

I can still navigate to my house there by memory. It's two blocks off the main drag, Warm Springs -- the street still bears the name of the city that Fremont devoured. Sawleaf Street, right in the middle. My brother and I decided that the giant tree in the front yard had been the namesake for the street, because of its serrated leaves that we raked into a tiny pile when the season changed from brown to green. The house next door was basically leveled and rebuilt while we lived there, the owners deciding that the property was worth more than the house on top of it and scraping the mess and starting over.

They were probably right. You couldn't get me to move to California now; for one thing, there's no way I could afford

it. When I visited my grandmother a few years ago, I also saw my uncle-who-works-in-the-music-business, Paul. He works in San Francisco, but lives in the hills south of the city. It's beautiful out there, wooded and astonishingly verdant. He grows orchids as a hobby.

I did not see my uncle-who-lives-in-Los-Angeles. I've never met that uncle. I don't believe my dad's spoken to him in decades, perhaps longer than I've been alive. No one talks to him anymore.

The only evidence that I ever saw that he exists is a recording that my grandmother was given by him of his daughter -- my cousin. She was in a soap opera. A prop, really: she sat on Santa's lap while he read a story, and the rest of the characters of the soap looked on. Maybe about six or so. Adorable and blonde. Her eyes roamed around the set as the scene played. We ooohed and aaawed about her, then music-business-uncle noted that she looked excruciatingly bored.

I have no idea how her career in show business has fared since then.



It's an odd thing, knowing there are members of your family out there that the rest of the family repudiates. You

wonder what their side of the story is, mostly. My dad, when I last pressed him on the issue on the pretext of a paper for school, says there was one fight final between Los-Angeles-uncle and my grandfather. He blamed everything that had gone wrong with his life on grandpa's decision to move from Illinois to California decades earlier. This, a man who was a lawyer, married, seemingly happy. Old disappointments dominating relationships his with everyone else.

Music-uncle: "When he became a lawyer it seemed like he just loved to argue about everything and sometimes he'd be tactless. He



managed to pretty much alienate everyone in the family at one point or another. After I got promoted to division manager at Tower Records he sent me a congratulations card: it seemed out of character for him, but I still have the card to this day, and it means a lot to me."

Stories we aren't a part of.



I HAVE BEEN TO NEW YORK CITY once, New York state twice, despite my mother being born upstate. (Her parents fled to the Bay Area early in her life, and she identifies much more strongly with California than New York.) The trip was a spur-of-the-moment thing, abetted by the random chance that a friend of mine was spending a summer semester at NYU. I crashed on her couch for a weekend and took in the sights. Times Square and The Statue of Liberty and the construction site that is the World Trade Center, but also a little back-street Italian dessert place, and the Strand, and just walking around Manhattan wide-eyed. And sleeping on a couch in a dorm room with three girls.

I wrote a play about New York, although I didn't really realize it until halfway through. That happens a lot. The realization-as-to-what-something-is-actually-about, that is, not the actual facts of something being about New York. Although that might be common for other people. Who knows. I thought the play was about the unknown and reaching for something beyond yourself, and I guess it still is, in a funny way. It took place as one 40-minute scene in an art gallery, where a young artist attempted to get people to pay attention to her and not the art. It's pretty good. One day I'll polish it up, maybe expand it to a full-length play and start shopping it around.

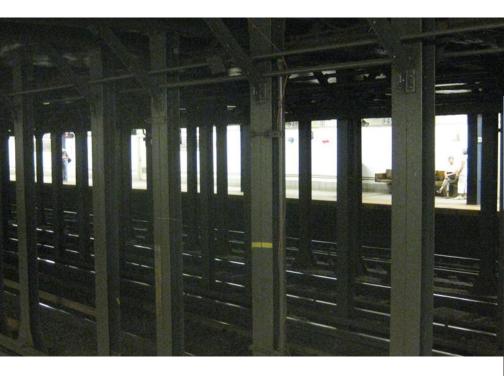
Anyway, New York started off as a simple "what-doesthis-character-want" and ended up as the central metaphor of the play, scaring the shit out of me, since that young ambitious artist was basically an authorial stand-in, with sculpture instead of writing as her passion.

New York is Where Things Happen. I realize it's simplistic and silly and very Pollyanna-ish, but I can't resist the sensation that if I could just get to New York I could do something with my life other than just shelve books until my back gives out and/or the company implodes beneath my feet. Walking around the city made me fall in love with it -- I love the subway, the streets, the skyscrapers, the riot of people. Having lived in suburbs my entire life, urban environments feel so much more alive, vibrant! Following a bunch of New Yorkers on twitter has not exactly divested me of my desire to live there; if anything, it's gotten stronger.



Maybe it's a transfer of belief. Everyone needs something to believe in, after all; belief appears to be built into the human brain. In the absence of belief in God, I believe in New York City.

That sounds horribly depressing.



As I was working on this magazine, I turned down a chance to move to New York City. A friend of mine, Julie, and I had talked about the two of us moving out to New York if and when she got into grad school there. (The New School, if you're curious.)

When I'd first heard that she'd gotten in, I'd been at once very excited and absolutely terrified. Julie, understand, is a very different sort of person than I am, and while I'm proud to call her a friend, her family has a lot more money than mine, and when she started talking about the theoretical rents she was looking at, my wallet did its best impression of a scared dog.

Not to say I won't live there someday. That's still the plan. Hell, part of the reason I'm putting this magazine together is to get my page layout skills un-rusted from five years of non-use. Now I can claim at least passing familiarity with Scribus, the poor man's InDesign, on my resume. (Not that anyone in the publishing world actually uses Scribus.)



## APATHY

ONE OF THE MOST COMMON REFRAINS among the political chattering classes over the past decades has been to decry the growth of apathy and ignorance among the American voter. Americans are at once becoming less and less knowledgeable about politics and less and less likely to vote for political office. (One would think that academics would want to avoid having voters who didn't know what they were voting for actually voting; but I digress.)

The election of Barack Obama signaled a change in the downward trend in two ways. general First, the competitiveness of the race between Obama and McCain drew voters in record numbers; turnout was the highest since 1968. An entire generation of young idealistic voters were drawn into politics through the rhetoric of Obama, what he stood for in their minds with regards to race, equality, health care, and that nebulous sense of renewal and, yes, CHANGE. These voters were excited, had definite views on the issues, and were ready to put in the work to elect a black man with a funny name to the highest office in the land.



The second change only became evident in the closing weeks of the election season, although it had been simmering beneath the surface for months previously. As McCain began to slip in the polls, and brought Sarah Palin aboard to prop him up, the rhetoric from the right began to move from argument to hostility to the thinlyveiled threat of violence; from standard disagreements to talk of "second amendment remedies".



This is what happens when voters who had been apathetic and uninformed look like when you remove their apathy but not their ignorance in the age of information. An engaged but clueless citizen soaks up knowledge where ever they can find it, and thanks to the internet, there are plenty of places to find what appear to be facts and begin to build an echo chamber. Sure, a savvy politician can ride a wave of anger into office. But eventually they'll just start electing each other. And then you get people in office who have trained themselves that reality is something to ignore.





## **DİGGİNG OUT** THE OLD

THIS IS THE OLDEST PIECE of writing I can find on my computer. It's from my Junior year of high school, I believe written for "satire" in one of my English classes. I share it out of curiosity, because it's definitely not any good.

THANK YOU FOR HAVING ME HERE TODAY. IT'S TRULY A DELIGHT TO SPEAK IN FRONT OF THE NATIONAL TURKTONAIN CONVENTION OF COMPARATIVE ATHEISTS. LET ME ALSO EXTEND MY CONGRATULATIONS TO THE TEAM FROM NORTHERN IDAHO WHO WON TODAY – FASTEST TIME IN THE "THINKING AWAY GOD" EVENT? VERY WELL DONE.

Now, as to the subject of my speech today. The last time I spoke to a crowd, they rose up chased me out of town; I hope you will be slightly more accommodating. I am here to discuss a topic very near to all our thoughts – the marriage of politics and religion.

Yes, I see some of you rolling you eyes. 'Not another speaker on Atheist politicians!' Nope. I come to tell you about the scourge that is the modern right-wind radical religious politician. However, even that you have heard before. But what about censorship? Did you know your views are being actively repressed?

Take that last new show, Life of Peter or something. It involved a religious man who talked to Jesus on a regular basis, like I would talk to my wife. I know, you all find

THE CONCEPT DEEPLY OFFENSIVE. BUT WOULD YOU EXPECT TO FIND THE TURKTONIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT UP IN ARMS ABOUT THIS? NO! IT'S WHOLESOME, RIGHT? NO; THEY ORGANIZED A MASSIVE FORM-LETTER WRITING DRIVE AGAINST THE COMPANY. BILLIONS OF ENRAGED HOUSEWIVES WHO HAD NEVER SEEN THE SHOW WROTE ABOUT THEIR DISGUST ABOUT THE ISSUE. THE OFFICE WAS INUNDATED WITH ANGRY AND VENOMOUS HATE MAIL, SOME THREATENING TO BOMB THE HEADQUARTERS IF THE SHOW CONTINUED, THEN EVOKING THE NAME OF THE LORD AND CALLING FOR PEACE ON EARTH IN THE ENDING SALUTATION.

I TELL YOU, THE SHOW VANISHED FROM THE AIR. THE NETWORK ALSO FIRED ANYONE WHO WORKED ON THE PROJECT, HAD THE ACTORS BURIED IN SHALLOW GRAVES OUT IN THE DESERT, AND CANCELED TWO SHOWS ON THE NEARBY TIME SLOTS, JUST TO BE SAFE.

I leaned never to underestimate the power of the uneducated being led by the angry that day. Give me a crowd large enough, the great Greek philosopher said, and I can move the world...

You had a statement? The show was terrible? Yes, yes it was. Even if the letter writing en masse had not occurred, the show would still likely not be on the air.

It's strange, digging things up like this. They represent selves that we aren't anymore, discarded versions of what we thought of as 'me'. I can see what I was trying to do here, but for the life of me I can't understand some of the choices I made. What's with "Turktonian"? Or the silly didacticism of the piece?

Never underestimate the silliness of what you used to think was brilliant.

## DİGİTAL Archeology

WE DUG UP THE ARCHIVE LAST YEAR. It's still shocking to some in the department how well it was preserved, seeing as the company went bust two decades ago. The problem was, of course, getting it into a readable, runnable format.

The old hard disks weren't the problem -- we could just scan them and hoover the bits right off of them. It was interfacing with the data once we had it. After all, we don't use Von Neumann-architectures anymore, haven't for decades. We had to call up some old documentation, itself aging quite badly, and fab up an entire tower just to start the emulation process.

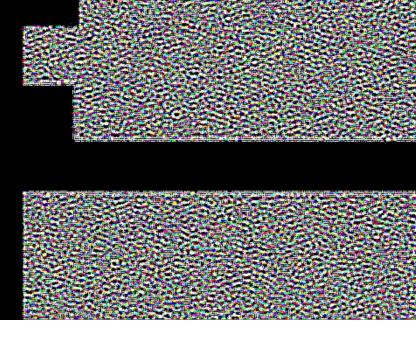
"Is this worth the trouble?" Susan asked.

"Of course. Think about it. We've heard reports of these primitive virtual-realities for decades, but who living experienced them? Or remembers them? We'll be the first in generations to see this! It'll be worth it for the attention it'll get from the Crowd, and maybe bring in some more leads to even older stuff."

"Fine, whatever. I bet it'll be filled with porn."

Susan is not a romanticist about the past. That's what's great about her.

Once we had a full tower running, I scanned it in and



started emulating the physical system in my local vSpace, then shared that shard with all the other members of the team. "Just 8 GHz?" someone complained.

"It's old tech. We can't push it too hard." I had carefully shoehorned in a multi-yottabyte drive, to make sure the archive had plenty of space to breathe, but other than than, I left it as it had been fabbed.

"OK, so we have the archive, but we don't have an interface into the various units of existence. I've got an AI churning on the problem; hopefully, we'll have an APIlike interface shortly." Abeni's avatar shrugged. "Ideally, it'll just run as a subinstance of the Space interface, and we can interact normally. I'd hate to have to revert to... keyboard-rat-monitor?" She looked up. "Is that the right term?"

"Mouse, not rat, but yeah, I agree, that would be

primitive to a silly degree." I checked some numbers. "Everyone's donating cycles to the AI, right? Don't want this to take too long."

"I'm running a sim of weather patterns, sorry, no extras to donate right now." Susan looked bored. "Anything else?"

"No, that's it for now. I'll message when the AI finishes." They all left the shard, and I slipped back to meatspace. With nothing better to do, I had the local fab unit spit out a hard-copy of the documentation we'd been able to scavenge from the system.

"-ARE FOUR TYPES OF LAND REGIONS; MAINLAND, PRIVATE REGION, HOMESTEAD AND OPENSPACE. A REGION COMPRISES AN AREA OF 65,536 M2 (16.194 ACRES) IN AREA, BEING 256 METERS ON EACH SIDE, MAINLAND REGIONS FORM ONE CONTINUOUS LAND M- [...] -ER PRIM LIMITS AND TRAFFIC USE LEVELS THAN MAINLAND REGIONS. THE OWNERS OF A PRIVATE REGION ENJOY ACCESS TO SOME ADDITIONAL CONTROLS THAT ARE NOT AVAILABLE TO MAINLAND OWNERS; FOR EXAMPLE, THEY HAVE A GREATER ABILITY TO ALTER THE SHAPE OF THE LAND. - [...] -65,536 m2 (16.194 ACRES) REGIONS AT AUCTION (ALTHOUGH SMALLER PARCELS ARE AUCTIONED ON OCCASION, TYPICALLY LAND PARCELS ABANDONED BY USERS WHO HAVE LEFT). ONCE A RESIDENT - [...] -ICE. Residents may also choose TO PURCHASE, OR RENT, LAND FROM ANOTHER RESIDENT (A RESIDENT LANDLORD) RATHER THAN FROM - [...] -IVATE REGION, THE BUILT-IN LAND SELLING CONTROLS ALLOW THE LANDLORD TO SELL LAND IN THE REGION TO ANOTHER RES- [...] -IP NOR TO NECESSARILY PAY A TIER FEE, AL-"

I tossed the mess into the reclamation chute and asked the fabber for dinner instead, checking the Cloud for news about anything else our team might be interested in. A few mentions of some old 'websites' archived on SeeD, but nothing earth-shattering.Susan pinged me. "Shard?"

I popped in wearing my casual silhouette while slurping noodles in meatspace. "I'm tired of dead media."

"That's blunt of you."

"Too much text. I've been relearning social niceties lately, and I guess they haven't all taken root again yet. But that's not the point."

"This is important work, Susan."

"You keep saying that, but it's also boring. When are we going to create something new, and not dig up ancestor crap?"

"Soon. We need more eyeballs to sustain any major creation, you know that. People sending cycles our way. And this might do it for us. Imagine the feedlines: 'First VR Environment Recreated!' 'Genius Archaeologists Recover History!'"

"'Nobody Cares About Dead Stuff'," she parroted back.

"Just give me this last project, then you get to steer the team for a while, how's that sound?"

She pondered. "Deal." She waltzed over to me. "When are you getting over to my zone of meatspace again?"

"You have somewhere for me to sleep?"

She grinned. "I don't think I need to fab anything if

you're coming over."

I coughed up my noodles. Coughing with silhouettes is odd, because the shard doesn't accept the animation as input, but the vocals come over just fine. Susan smiled. "That's a date, then, huh?"

"Sure thing," I sputtered, wiping my chin.

She logged, and I popped back into meatspace, checking the AI, then sleeping for a few cycles.



When I woke up, the AI was pinging me. "I have a simplified API set up for you. Would you like an instance of this embedded within a shard for you?"

"In a little bit, but prepare it for when I'm ready." I

pinged the team and set up the shard.

Abeni showed up first. "It worked?"

"Yeah, the AI says we're in. Ready to go exploring?" She swapped her silhouette to her 'adventurer' kit -- goggles, pith helmet, and khaki -- and grinned.

The rest of the team popped in, and I instructed the AI to embed the sim. "Record our displays, please."

The sim popped into view around us, and we waited for the resolution to improve. "Loading sort of slow," Abeni muttered. After a minute, I asked the AI what was taking so long.

"That's as high-res as the data allows."

We gasped. It was one thing to understand that our ancestors had to deal with visible polygons in their virtual environments; it was another thing to actually experience them. "What a piece of shit," Susan said.

"Well, come on, let's take a look around." We tromped out from beneath the faux-Roman columns that we had spawned under and started cataloging the environment.

Abeni was the first to realize the sim allowed for character flight; soon enough, we were all zooming around through the low-resolution environments.

Susan pinged me from her vantage point above one fabbed dwelling. "Garish, isn't it?"

"I think it's an art reference."

"Still, it's as ugly as sin."

"It was a different time. Think of the joy that person must have taken in building a completely implausible house in a virtual world."

"What about that?" She spun and pointed to a giant glowing box with the words PENIS PRIMS CHEAP blazing in a dozen colors on the side.

"I will grant the lack of aesthetic value there."

We continued documenting the find. As expected, it was appallingly primitive in other ways: no AI presence, only rudimentary scripting, laughable limitations on object design. Susan and Abeni had a good laugh as their silhouettes stepped through a faulty door-opening animation over and over again.

"How big is this simulation supposed to be, anyway?" Abeni asked as she flew up into the air again.

"Theoretically, a couple hundred times the size of the Earth," I replied. "But they didn't fill it, or come anywhere close. There's maybe an area the size of England with actual design on it."

"Not bad for the time."

"Are we done here?" Susan drifted over, her silhouette looking bored. "Markus wanted to see me about another project sometime today."

"I guess so." I signaled the AI to disable the embedded sim, and we popped back into my personal shard.

What's the plan, then?"

"I'm going to think about it, but I have some meatspace traveling to do," I said. "I'll ping if something comes up. Abeni and Susan logged, and was left staring at the empty shard.



The train had vSpace access built in, but I didn't use it, for once. Instead, I stared out the window at the landscape.

Polygons. That was what was bugging me. The vSpace shard had seemed... sort of silly after visiting the embedded sim. Why emulate the real world so closely? Theoretically, we could do anything in the virtual space. So why did we choose to stand around as if we were still talking face-to-face?

Susan was waiting when I arrived. "You should travel more often."

"I should."

Her space was a mess. "Sorry there's nowhere to sit. Here, jump into a shard for a moment." The room vanished, and we stood in a perfectly white expanse: an empty vSpace.

I cringed slightly. "What's wrong?" She asked.

"I've been feeling a little off lately. What did you want to show me?"  $% \mathcal{T}^{(n)} = \mathcal{T}^{(n$ 

Over the next hour, Susan paraded dozens of designs past me for art pieces she wanted to fab. "And we can hold a simultaneous exhibition! Both in a shard and at the gallery, so that anyone can come by."

"Interesting." My mind was wandering, thinking about polygons again, rough edges. Everything Susan was showing me was smooth as glass, designed down to the micron level with help from an AI.

The forms vanished. "You don't like it."

I shrugged. "Can we talk face-to-face?"

We both logged and sat on her bed. "You're still thinking about that old sim from yesterday, aren't you?"

I nodded. "I think we can pull together the most interesting parts, make it accessible, and put it out for

the Crowd to view. It'll be a nice artistic statement.

She shook her head. "There's no future in dead media."

"I'm beginning to doubt there's one anywhere else."

"You understand my position already. I'm not interested in helping with that ugly old stuff." She sniffed disdainfully. "Besides, literally nobody cares."

"I want to change that, Susan, I want to make them care."

She gave me a sad look and pecked me on the cheek. "I got an offer to join Helen's fab group yesterday. I was waiting to see what you said before I responded."

My heart sank. "You should take it, no question."

"Sorry to make you come all the way out here."

"No, it was nothing." I stood and walked to the door, but turned before I left and smiled at her. Her face was unreadable, and for a moment the entire room took on a fuzzy look, as if I had never left the sim and instead everything was made of polygons still, including the single tear running down her cheek.



# POETRY



### DIXIE

The red Dixie cups for my former boss' birthday party game of flip-cup clap noisily against the tan wood table.

The television flickers, glowing signs without significance; network news as wallpaper, detached from the room.

I swill cheap beer for the first time in my life, and try not to taste it. The alcohol burns my unaccustomed throat.

Miles away, sleeping on the marble floor of the state capitol and in the colored box are protesters from all over Wisconsin.

I chug and slam the cup. Dixie is owned by those bankrolling the governor, billionaires with a contempt for the local chapters of

> Socialist-commie-anarcho-pinkos who can't drink or flip or fight but who long to build something better.

#### TO THE NEXT GENTLEMAN IN LINE

I know it pains you to see the Change Lady, slowly reach into her enormous purse to count out all the coins she will need to pay for her twenty-dollar tome on the movements of crypto-communists in the radical left-wing;

I feel your rage from here, penetrating even my badge, which announces my name for you so that it can be repeated to the manager who will ignore your complains that I rolled my eyes to your face when you had the gall

to tell me how to do my job; this after joking the item my register couldn't scan was free but before you asked, scratching your beard and grinning wildly, why we are so much pricier than a website named after a river.

### CAMPUS

The library squats in the center of campus utilitarian architecture gone wrong. Cranes in the east, storks in a muddy pond watching nests. Holy symbols dot the campus relics of absorbed sacred spaces.

Tivoli an architect's nightmare; dozens of buildings tripped into each other walking across the street. Stunted little trees line the concrete, victims not of maltreatment but thin Colorado air.

A street preacher shouts salvation at the center of campus, preaching Jesus in front of the synagogue. Students stand just outside the doors smoking under a sign admonishing "do not smoke within 20 feet of this doorway."

#### PINECONE

She rooted around in her bag searching for something "not trite," and pulled out a single baby pinecone. "Here," she said, handing it to him, "a token."

The sun tumbled down around them. He could hear the roiling of surf above the sound of three middle-aged women drinking their final margaritas of the day. "Why this?"

The soft spines rubbed his palms raw. This reminded him of everything this trip had not been: instead of casual heat and empty motivation, only a heavy, bitter cold.

"I know." He turned, and they walked side by side down to the shoreline. The rotten smell of salt filled his nostrils and the setting sun flashed in his eyes, filling him.

His eyes stung as he threw.

#### Words

They say that the Inuit have fourteen or thirty or one hundred and seventy-three words for snow but that's nothing

compared to what the poet has words for. Twenty-four about the way that the light caught your face when you rose from the pool,

and another seventeen for your frown at a joke; an entire century of words, the way your body moved on rough cotton sheets.

I considered writing a poem with o'er and thou and forsooth so you could recognize it and know it was for you alone, but

the words refused my demands running down the sides of the desk puddling at my toes and watching, limply, as you walked away.

### THREE FLIES

three flies chasing around the table

landing on each other. it's either

> an insect fight or ménage à trois.



http://25hourwatch.com/

http://deltamualpha.org/ http://deltamualpha.tumblr.com/ @humblefool David Ashby





Prepared by MagCloud for David Ashby. Get more at humblefool.magcloud.com.