

A Story

It was a dark and stormy night. I had just taken a writing course and today's lecture was on original story openings. As I thought about how some students thought that anything they wrote was worthy of being printed, I started scribbling on a notepad that I always kept next to my bed. A free verse poem!!! About how much life sucks!!! I bet no one has written one of these before.

Unfortunately, I soon realized that I am not very good at poems. After seventeen attempts at making "nucleotidyltransferase" work in iambic pentameter, I gave up. In a fit of rage I set out for the UC for coffee (if coffee is good for the WB editor, it must be good for me) and soon found myself sitting on a comfortable couch in Grind Central. There weren't many people in the place, and before I knew it I was face to face with an irate Elizabeth Simpson. She was upset because someone had mistaken the Pub for Grind Central. After she was sure that I understood the finer points of the issue, she sold me a small bag of chocolate covered espresso beans. With the "crack-filled rabbit raisins" in my hand, I again set my sights on the life sucks poem.

"Life sucks because..." That was as far as I could manage to get without becoming discouraged and tearing up the thing. Sometimes I got a little farther, like maybe "Life sucks because you suck," but then I remember that there are many people in the world, and maybe some of them don't suck. Generalizations are always a bad thing. "Life sucks because..." Writer's block. I hate that. "Life sucks because some people suck." No, it's not bad compared to earlier drafts, but it doesn't quite have that pizzazz I'm looking for. Plus it doesn't rhyme. Poems that don't rhyme are dumb. Maybe I can try to work the word fuck in there somewhere. Fuck rhymes with luck. "Life sucks because I don't fuck, enough." It's getting there, it must be the caffeine starting to kick in. All of a sudden I heard a large rumble blaring over the Hanson CD that I was listening to. I hate

when people disturb me when I'm listening to Hanson. That really bugs my shit. There was a bright light coming through my window, and the next thing I remember, I was swimming with the fishes. Except they were aliens and not fish, and I was floating in space and not swimming. Floating in water is a lot like floating in space. If you've ever floated in space, you'd agree.

...I sat down, I realized that the hospital Johnnie that I was wearing was on backwards. Fortunately, I happened to be wearing my Funroos™, the Wonder-Woman ones. "Hey! Down here!" Looking down, I saw that my slippers were now real bears—Bob and Fred were alive. "We really don't appreciate your smelly feet impaling our backs. Take them the hell out!"



This was all too creepy, so surreal. As I reached down to throw them across the room, Bob grabbed my wrist. "You humans are all alike, thinking you are so superior. One day, Nature will have her revenge." Maybe I should lay off the drugs for a while. Once again drug-free and recovering after that last trip, I realized that one more time, and I would be legitimately crazy. Ah, yes, the fever of my efforts, quickly incinerated, murdered insolently in the green peas of the night. 'Life sucks poem', my ass. This ain't no poem. This is the courageous, brutal inferno of war. Yes, you heard me, war. All right, all you narrow-minded, nostril-obsessed lunatics, over to one side. You paranoid amphibian Neil Young fanatics, on the other side. That just about summarizes the Clark student body, wouldn't you agree? Aachh! Help! The narrow-minded, nostril-obsessed lunatics are after me! Don't worry, Flea! I'm coming! I will save you! I will surely save you from the army of pants! Run quickly, for they will catch up with you! They will swallow us as if we are raw fish! They will move our weather metallic burmese mountain lions! They will... They will... Oh, no! A tumbleweed, going by the window!

The 24-Hour TIMELINE continued...

3:59 pm — Jan changed background to women's heads.

4:55 pm — Jessica walks in as Mike Garber yelps in ROC-U. Jan is writing about apathy, Mac is working on WB #11, and Zack is being apathetic. Purple levels noticeably increase. All clear. Oh, well, maybe only a little clear, now that I think about it.

5:00 pm — Mollie comes back from work.

5:05 pm — Zack brings in a lone red bench. Mandy and Taybin arrive.

I quickly realized the tumbleweed was actually a delusion, it was really the shadow of the doctor passing my glassed-in window. Oh my god, I've stumbled onto the set of "One Who Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." I take my medication, and quickly walk out into bright, sunny, late 1975. I walk down the stairs of the New York hospital they are filming in, and I see a proud mother with her new baby. I ask her what she is naming the baby. She says "Zachary." I look closely, and notice a characteristic grimace. I look on her medical bracelet, which has just fallen to the floor, and see this name, Ordynans.

But my mind wandered to the contemplation of the fate of young 'Zachary Ordynans.' A financial advisor, maybe? Perhaps a lumberjack, hopping from tree to tree in British Columbia. Or a newspaper editor. Nah. Fortunately, I cannot concentrate on any subject for any length of time, least of all poetry. As I lifted my head from my musings, I realized that I had mysteriously ambled to the highlands of New Zealand. I happened upon a troop of aggravated kiwi who bared their non-existent teeth at me from their pointed beaks. They chased me through the jungle, flapping their pathetic wings at me, and waddling their bulbous bodies. I was saved by a village of pot-bellied Maori Maoris dancing the hakra and waving their little red books at me. After they made me part of their tribe, Michael Palin emerged from the woods, apparently filming his "Full Circle" series. After having a beer with Michael, I decided it was time to return to Berlin.

Ah, yes. The smell of the beer, the sounds of the techno-throbbing-bass-blow-your-ears-out loudness. The taste of my banal existence. It's Berlin, alright. And yet I can't help noticing that the beer has the scent of formaldehyde, the techno more resembles a heart monitor, and the taste... that will never change. I'm still in the hospital, lying on the bed, staring at the same seven ceiling tiles. But these nightmares and memories keep haunting me. Here and there and over again. The proud mother, those undergraduate days at Clark, poetry, dear sweet Liz Simpson, my first time, my first hit, coffee, more coffee. My first job, the newspaper days, a little more coffee, then the harder drugs. Correspondent work, Africa, New Zealand, Finland, my first wife, my first mistress, my first divorce. A few more drugs. It's haunting me. How did I get here? Where did I go wrong? What brought me to this place?

Beep beep beep, continued the heart monitor, beep beep beep. What does that remind me of? Beep beep beep...beep...beep beep beep. In alarm I looked around the room for some comforting explanation for the suddenly sporadic rhythm sweetly pounding into my brain. My eyes came to rest on my digital watch which I finally realized had beeped on the half hour as it was meant to. 2:30. Crap! I weakly lifted my open hand to my head in despair, remembering that I had promised to call my friend Rudolph and remind him to return my favorite CD: Barry Manilow, "Still Alive in Lebanon." The jerk better bring it back soon; that David Hasselhoff single just isn't cutting it anymore. Unbeknownst to me, the motion of arm had dislodged the IV from my arm, and again I became delusional; at least, that's what the nurses later told me. They call me Ishmael," I repeated over and over again. "They call me Ishmael..."

I could feel my body going limp, the nurses hands trying desperately to keep me on the bed. Unsuccessful, I slid onto the cold floor and under the adjacent bed. A pair of rough hairy arms pulled me out and under the bright fluorescent lights lifted me back onto the bed. These sensations reminded me that I should close my refrigerator when I get out. If I do. Such strange thoughts to be thinking. And where the heck did I leave my lederhosen?



The 24-Hour TIMELINE continued...

- 5:10 pm — Jess calls ROC-U and tell them to turn it down, since we were trying to write. Radio DJ did same. All set.
- 5:17 pm — General discussion of whether Randy's picture should be in the office.
- 5:30 pm — Eight people in the room. You can do anything as long as it won't get you sued. Four computers in full effect, baby.
- 5:41 pm — General consensus to eat together.

Back and forth, in and out of reality; all of this travelling is getting me nowhere. It may just be time to actually give the story a pretense of direction. Sober and sore, I made my way out of bed and into some new clothes. It's now or never; a poet's got to live if he wants to break out of this "Life sucks just like your mom," pattern. Maybe I should hop on a freight train and tour coffee houses, exalting my American buddhism. Nah, it's been done. Maybe I'll just head to the Mississippi and write stories of lovable scamps stirring up mischief. Oh wait, that sounds familiar, too. I guess what it all comes down to is that I can't write, I have no wit, and I don't have any new ideas. It seems all I'm left with is a one way ticket to Clark University. I hear there's a few openings on Student Council. If not, someone's bound to resign sometime.

came bounding down a busy four-lane road and crashed through a cluttered intersection. All at once, there was powdered sugar everywhere, kicked up like snow in some violent storm. Jelly erupted about the streets, painting giant skyscrapers like some Jackson Pollack work gone horribly wrong. And people just stood and stared, covered in piles of sugary donut slime, completely bewildered by the titanic donut continued on relentlessly, tumbling at a terrifying pace, reducing everything in its path to a -like dough. There was only one thing to do. Call the cops.

Even we can't print those words!

-Zac

It was all a dream. I learned that in my creative endings class.

THE END!

Forget Clark, I am going to be a writer. Try again. Focus. Wait maybe I should get some coffee before I start. Need to make sure I am awake. Damn! I still can't think of anything. They say that drugs can stimulate creativity. Drugs, yeah. Hey wait, I think I am straight edge; that means no drugs. Actually maybe I should be a vegan also. Yeah no drugs and no animal products. Wait that makes me just like some Clark Students. Damn this Clark. OK maybe I should go see this place. Wait where is it? Worcester? Where the hell is that? Oh, okay! Hey look at that building! What a cool place that would be to trip. Yeah, trip, drugs, cool. Oh nevermind. I am going home to take a nap, and get some more coffee.

With contributions by: Taybin Rutkin, Dave Bernstein, Zack, Mandy Reyna, Jessica Lerner, Mollie Wittstein, Eric Mattison, Emily Sachs, Emily Kirchherr, Jon Messinger, Sean Prager, Bill Evans, and Taybin again with the surprise ending.

Of course, Clark is all well and good, but what about the plight of the estranged Lizard People? Talk about your lederhosen. Anyway, I awoke the next day to find myself in Cleveland. It was a bright sunny day, and bright blue sky beamed down on the happy people of Cleveland. Geese mingled leisurely in a nearby park. The whole setting was so picturesque, I didn't notice the giant 300-foot donut rolling down the street. Almost. With a clap of the thunder the giant jelly cruller jumped out of pocket in the horizon and



The 24-Hour TIMELINE continued...

- 5:50 pm — Argument over which fonts are funny.
- 5:55 pm — Debate over which Choose-Your-Own-Clark-Adventure book was the best.
- 6:40 pm — Fantastic food arrives, dinner break spontaneously begins. Go figure.
- 7:10 pm — Messinger leaves, Prager arrives. Taybin returns. Jess adds to the story, Mac proofreads. Jessica leaves, radio play begins, Mollie struggles to open a Snapple, and Zack writes this entry in the log.
- 7:11 pm — Mollie and Mac fight over location of a sandwich. Zack pronounces "this is dumb." (cont'd)