

Jason vs GIJOE

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Creative Writing & Poetics

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Abstract

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Jason vs GI JOE is partly an exercise in autobiography, an experiment in relational aesthetics, and an interdisciplinary artist project at the intersection of comic books, creative writing and performance art. This comic book, *Jason vs. GIJOE*, is a postmodern double erasure, based on the comic book GIJOE: Cobra II (Issue 1). The original pictures from the comic book have been removed, and replaced by a series of short narratives, describing autobiographical events from the life of the author: me, Jason. Speech bubbles from the original have been left to comment back over top of the stories, obscuring meaning but creating moments of unplanned dialogue. The comic is a readymade, twice erased: once to replace the drawings of the initial comic, and again when using the original dialogue bubbles to speak back to the narrative.

Jason vs GIJOE

Jason Tentor: Poetics Statement

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Jason vs GI JOE is partly an exercise in autobiography, an experiment in relational aesthetics, and an interdisciplinary artist project at the intersection of comic books, creative writing and performance art. This comic book, *Jason vs. GIJOE*, is a postmodern double erasure, based on the comic book GIJOE: Cobra II (Issue 1). The original pictures from the comic book have been removed, and replaced by a series of short narratives, describing autobiographical events from the life of the author: me, Jason. Speech bubbles from the original have been left to comment back over top of the stories, obscuring meaning but creating moments of unplanned dialogue. The comic is a readymade, twice erased: once to replace the drawings of the initial comic, and again when using the original dialogue bubbles to speak back to the narrative.

This poetics statement focuses on key thinkers, sources of inspiration, and questions of process related to the larger project. This writing grows as a continuation of my larger artistic practice that includes previous performance experiments and music. This thesis project is the nexus of those three artistic genres: hip hop, comic book publishing, and relational art.

00 Larger Context Arts Practice

I don't believe in art. I believe in artists.

-Marcel Duchamp

My practice as an artist is always focused on the social; I have always placed myself at the center of my work. Without me, my work would not exist. My MA in Cultural Studies yielded over a dozen relational art projects that focused on concepts like time travel, monetary relativism, and other playful, yet critical events. The year was 2012 when I conceived of my first performance, *Inverted Pan Handler*, where I held a cardboard sign and gave away money instead of asking for it. I began my artistic practice in this way: once a month I would construct a concept then execute it, with ideas ranging from political provocations (*Join the Tea Party*) to speculative invitations (*Time Machine*). This creative dynamism continued into my MFA in Creative Writing, where my initial aspiration was to become a full-fledged commercial rap artist. This goal was quickly realized and I began writing, recording and performing hip hop professionally in my first year in my program. Upon the advice of an instructor I realized that my MFA thesis would be better realized if I approached it as a formal writing project, rather than in music form. This was a fortuitous decision in that I have been able to bring my writing, music, and

performance into a cohesive effort. The comic book references my rap music branding name, “Jason” which I had specially designed for me in a Hebrew font by the graphic artist Israel Medrona. The project also concludes with an actualized relational art gesture, similar to those performances I realized previously but now incorporating the finished comic book. So, my studies and its practices have come full circle and they now compliment each other in a form of composite autobiographical art.



[Jason vs GIJOE: Pike’s Place Market, 2019]

01 Marcel Duchamp

No other artist has had as much of an impact on my thesis project, Jason vs. GIJOE, than the conceptual art master than Marcel Duchamp. His 1917 performance entitled Fountain, consisted of what he called, "a readymade." Originally, it was an early 20th century porcelain men's urinal he entered into an art exhibition. Other than signing the toilet with the words R. Mutt, his art object was unchanged from the original manufacturer; a commercially produced commodity that was instantly elevated to art once the artist recontextualized it. It has been this artistic thrust, the intersection of the everyday into the world of art, that I have focused on in my post-bachelor studies. This theme continues in my MFA work with my thesis, Jason vs. GIJOE, where I incorporated elements of Relational Aesthetics, which I will discuss in chapter two.

The relationship between my work and Duchamp's theories is interpretative and conceptualized by me as part of the art itself, that the comic book is in fact a ready made. The comic is used as a vehicle for meaning so that, conceivably another readymade format could have been chosen to convey the vignette stories fragments that appear in the comic. Any artist could extend the concept of a readymade to printed and literary forms, such as a newspaper or encyclopedia, etc. Before I published my comic, I have often rehearsed the idea that by my using the format of a comic book as my vehicle for meaning, the reader will bring with them many expectations of what a comic book is. They might also bring nostalgic memory or a love for the art. This is my thinking of how I extended the conceptual readymade to include printed forms.

Just as Marcel Duchamp added text to his readymade, Fountain, I wrote over the pictures in mine. Because of how I altered the original comic, it can be also be recognized as a post-modern literary form known as "erasure." I used Adobe Photoshop software to remove and write over the drawn pictures in the comic, although I left the original art for each chapter title, of which there are five. Thus, a literary readymade is malleable and interchangeable, so long as there is a definite form remaining from the original. The idea of the literary readymade is that it convinces the reader that they have indeed encountered an authentic artifact on first appearance, but because of its context, or its material artistic transformation the object has become a work of art.

02 Nicolas Bourriaud

The form and format of Jason vs. GIJOE is paramount to the work, yet its contents command as much attention as its meaning. The comic is written in the voice of a detached autobiography with the first four stories looking at early childhood and the last story sharing what becomes a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy involving an art action. The scene in this last story describes me, the artist, placing the self-published comic book in Seattle's Pike Place public market, unnoticed by its patrons and employees.

This action described and executed in real life is a manifestation inspired by Nicolas Bourriaud, a French art critic and theorist that coined the term Relational Aesthetics to describe the efforts of artists who were using relational methods while creating art. I have been active in creating and documenting instances of relationship art since completing a previous master's in cultural studies at the University of Washington, Bothell where I collected over a dozen of such performances.

So, integrating my prior experience with relational art into the comic book seemed like a natural move and would expand the intellectual impact that the work would have, seeking to be categorized as a work of literary art.

I attended classes in my first year of study in a Creative Writing MFA program that introduced to the cohort the concept of textual enactments in an art gallery setting. These courses were instrumental in my thinking of the triad relationship I would explore in my thesis between art, writing, and performance. Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*, although not a monopoly on relational art theory, informed me to the tone and character of what would be my relational text, *Jason vs GIJOE*. The French art critic's writing elucidated art projects that evoke social commentary as well as meaningless playful gestures. I attempted to incorporate these themes simultaneously while providing a cohesive trajectory in my comic that made sense to me. Alongside my inspiration from contemporary art in my deceptively simple, conceptually layered project, the courses in my writing program focused on how text can be the constituent between creator and audience.

My cohort participated in art activities that fed back to the original artist, text that was altered and mutated from the audience, thus the receivers were activated and not passive. I am the audience of the original *GIJOE* comic and I "pass it" back to the artists in a conversation that maintains a structure while utilizing erasure to insert my voice. It is significant that I covertly reinsert my version of the comic into the commercial network by placing copies into magazine and comic shops. By my utilizing a generic barcode on the comic, it can be purchased by a customer. The money from the contrived purchase would stay in the cashier drawer, a sort of rent

paid for the comic while it occupied shelf space in a Relational Aesthetic gesture. This is simply a romanticized perspective on my forcing the comic into the local market, but it is an interesting concept on the relationship between the consumer and critical engagement with the market.

03 Stan Lee / Process

No poetic statement based on a comic could undervalue the contribution made by late comic artist, Stan Lee. The fields of texts in my comic that describe images were originally hand drawn comic style frames, much like the directors of the matrix used comic perspectives to film scenes in the movie. I too was inspired by the work of Lee in Spiderman and X-men, where the characters are depicted through illustration rather than through photographs. I drew my original sketches for this work thinking about them as comic book stills—and used them as inspiration for the text. The intention was to give each text frame a feeling of action but to limit the description to a single frame of stylized memory.

One thing that significantly contributes to the veiled complexity of my project is the nature of what a comic is pioneered greatly by Lee and others. My concept of the ready-made discussed in the first chapter owes greatly to their work, because I have borrowed the discourse created by comic founders on what a comic is. Then, I invite through the ready-made for my reader to enter my story though this lens, carrying with it all comic book associations, which applies these layers over my detached autobiographical stories. The potential and significance of my stories would have been greatly reduced and taken only at face value without the added audience imagination of reading these stories from a comic book.

Instead of offering art critique as a way of writing through the panels I chose a poetics with certain constraints or rules to bring my pictures together in a cohesive story. First, although I authored the pictures, and thus had full knowledge of their contexts, I wrote about them with knowledge that can be only be seen in the image, the hand written drawing. I did not acknowledge anything that a complete stranger could not see. In this way, I turned each drawing into a mental photograph inspired by my hand drawn depictions. I also used terms like "the boy" whenever I wrote about myself to objectify my narrative. Another rule was for me to write about everything in the presence tense without any time elapsing in any one image. It is as if I thought through the significant details of each panel's image and I am processing the scene for the viewer, albeit with only words to transpose meaning.

One of the most complex mechanisms of a comic are the way it is read: from left to right with panels of nothing between each frame, thus the concept of elapsed time is involved, which requires the reader to make important assumptions in order to understand the story. This element is reflected in my writing but because I further refine the memories into drawings and then the drawings into text, my thesis contains a certain body that nuances the reader's experience into something that isn't quite a comic book but is perhaps something more than a vignette. This work is cross genre, cross art form and cross media, holding the reader between worlds, including between visualized and written worlds.

04 Roland Barthes

The work of Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida: Reflection on Photography* occupies a critical position in reference to my project Jason vs. GIJOE. Both use description to elucidate the referent in the images, but whereas Barthes clarifies his memory using the photographic image, I conversely use my memory to produce/draw my image. Then I use that image to describe it words in a process more similar to Barthes.' The concept of the punctum in a photograph for Barthes is that which "pricks" the viewer and instills an undeniable fascination or curiosity. The punctum could be a detail of great interest that draws the attention of the viewer. For me, each memory I chose, and therefore every derived image I drew from those memories, are punctums of memory, referents in my mind, emotion or recalled material objects.

Another differential between the theory of *Camera Lucida* and the way my process functions in Jason vs. GIJOE is that Barthes posits the idea that bodies respond to the presence of a camera, which he calls a "photographic ritual." In contrast to me recalling images from my childhood, none of the bodies in my memory undergo the photographic ritual. The people in my story are as candid as could possibly be: they don't know (and could never have known) that they would be remembered. This is an incredible circumstance given that by today's standards, surveillance is always a factor with technology and security at hand. The stories (except for the final artistic gesture) occurred before the cell phone was even a ubiquitous technology. In this project, memory is the substitute for photography.

Early in my process, I did not bring into consideration Barthes emotio-analytical approach to describing photographs, although that is how it evolved for me. My first impulse was to treat my drawings as individual works of art that I could respond to as art criticism. This technique would have developed a much more complex description of the panels, but I worried that the imagined scenes would lose image resonance and connection to each other through its art-speak. I decided instead to write my narrative in a third voice, while keeping in mind the connection Barthes made when he looked at his photographs.

05 The Stories

The subjects of each chapter were chosen at random, but were meant to signify spiritual moments in my childhood. They were an attempt at documenting seminal moments that contributed greatly into developing the adult who is enacting the relational aesthetic gesture in chapter five. In the first chapter, The Pomegranate, I emphasized the boy first grew up in a country ranch setting, abound with wild pomegranates. Then, the boy moved residences and the pomegranates "followed" him until he combusted one of them to discover with sheer delight that it was the same fruit he ate at the ranch with his sister and dad. The pomegranate has a special significance in many cultures, especially in the Jewish culture.

The number of seeds in a pomegranate is commonly associated with the amount of commandments that were given to the children of Israel in the Torah: 613. My sister and I were reminded by my mother early on of our closely documented Ashkenazi German Mexican Jewish bloodline, a sort of anomaly in most people's minds, because an Israeli diaspora story is rarely

associated with the country of Mexico. We did not practice Judaism at home, but its traditional food found its way into our kitchen to the credit of my mother. Also, we always identified as being partly from Israel when either my sister or I were asked what our racial backgrounds were.

Chapter two, The Church is described as, through a chance of fate, a breaking of its teachings through seeing the space of worship through two drastically different perceptions. In the first instance, the church is a lively place full of dancing inter-married couples. The pianist keeps the music playing and the feeling of worship going in the church. Next, by accident or by an act of God, the boy wakes up to a completely empty, dark church after having fallen asleep. Even though the rules of the writing do not allow for a description of the boy's feelings, it can be deduced that an event like this would change the way the boy understood the activities of the church. The disorienting awakening of the boy brings contrast between an empty and a bustling church.

Chapter three has a metaphorical significance as well as a literal one. The Infinite Sidewalk represented for me the opportunity for escape from the perceived oppression of home life. I say perceived, because by many other standards I had a stable childhood. When my mother's strict rules and punishment happened to my great disfavor, I rode off on a bike or my skateboard and felt a comfort in the pit of my stomach for defying authority. The significance of the sidewalk was self-created to signify a non-space and a utility of freedom. It epitomized my experience in Southern California before I moved. In this chapter, I address a problem that I experienced in fourth grade at elementary school. In one of the panels I describe being thrown on a wall in a school bathroom by the teacher Mr. Nelson (his first name is unknown to me). I did not tell

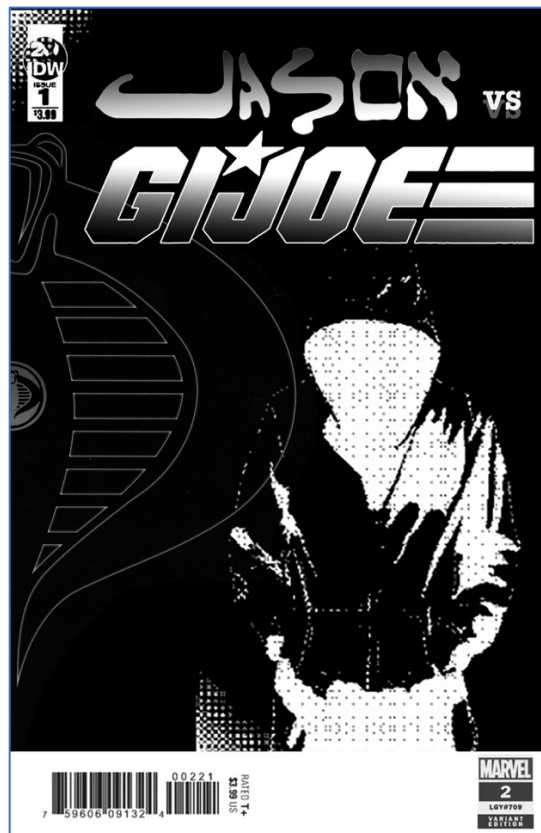
anyone about this incident before I wrote Jason vs. GIJOE, so the comic serves a few purposes. One of them is liberating my humiliation of being abused by a teacher, a clear violation of a certain trust they have to nurture children and not harm them.

In chapter four, How I lost my virginity at age 12, "the boy" leaves his sister at home to lose his virginity with an older teenager. His father is upset and goes to look for him and finds him riding home with Bruce from next door riding on the pegs. My memory recalls mostly that Bruce set up a meeting with the girl I only know as Cindy. Due to the writing constraints I made for myself conveying the comic panels was more difficult for this story. I wanted to write that Bruce was the instigator of this meeting, that he was disappointed for not sleeping with Cindy and that my dad wanted me to watch my sister instead of taking off to lose my virginity. When my dad yelled and told me to sit in the car, he told Bruce to ride my bike to the apartment. While I sat in the car I wondered if he knew or could somehow smell on me the encounter I just had. After this event this event unfolds, I take the liberty of providing one pane snapshots of my sex life. Each one of these describes a significant experience, yet not all of them are instances where sex occurred. For example, one panel describes making out with my baby sitter in the maternity/breastfeeding section of the church.

The final chapter, chapter five, is the relational aesthetic aspect of this comic and is interesting because the event of placing the comic into the newsstand happens after I wrote about and published it in Jason vs. Gi JOE. It was a simple matter of acting out the scene in chapter five. I wrote about this relational aesthetic gesture with a seasoned hand, after all I had already accomplished much more difficult projects during my masters in cultural studies thesis. So,

06 Cover Art Explained

Although the story only makes one reference to GIJOE, the GIJOE and Cobra iconology is an underpinning both in format and in story. In the title, the Hebrew style font used to write Jason in Jason vs. GIJOE provides a suitable replacement for what would typically be written: Cobra, GIJOE's fictional arch-nemesis. This enemy force created to entertain children was purely the imagination of the GIJOE writing team. There was never an ethnic force, army, or terrorist group that resembled the cobra organization. It was only what the writers thought would be convincing as a threat against the government sponsored GIJOE.



[Jason vs GIJOE: Cover Art, 2019]

GIJOE and Cobra are symbols that influenced a great number of Generation X and Y children growing up in the United States, especially those who played with the toys or read the comics. Cobra was an oppositional icon in GIJOE, used to represent the othering of a potent adversarial force. This comic uses the imagery of the Cobra “enemy” as a metaphor to illustrate the nuances, complexities, and paradoxes of American popular cultural imagination, and to reinforce how even the “nemesis” to GIJOE is still undeniably American. The comic replaces the name Cobra with the name of the author, Jason, to personalize the role of the imagination in media and memory, and to suggest ways for artists to intervene in these kinds of social constructions.

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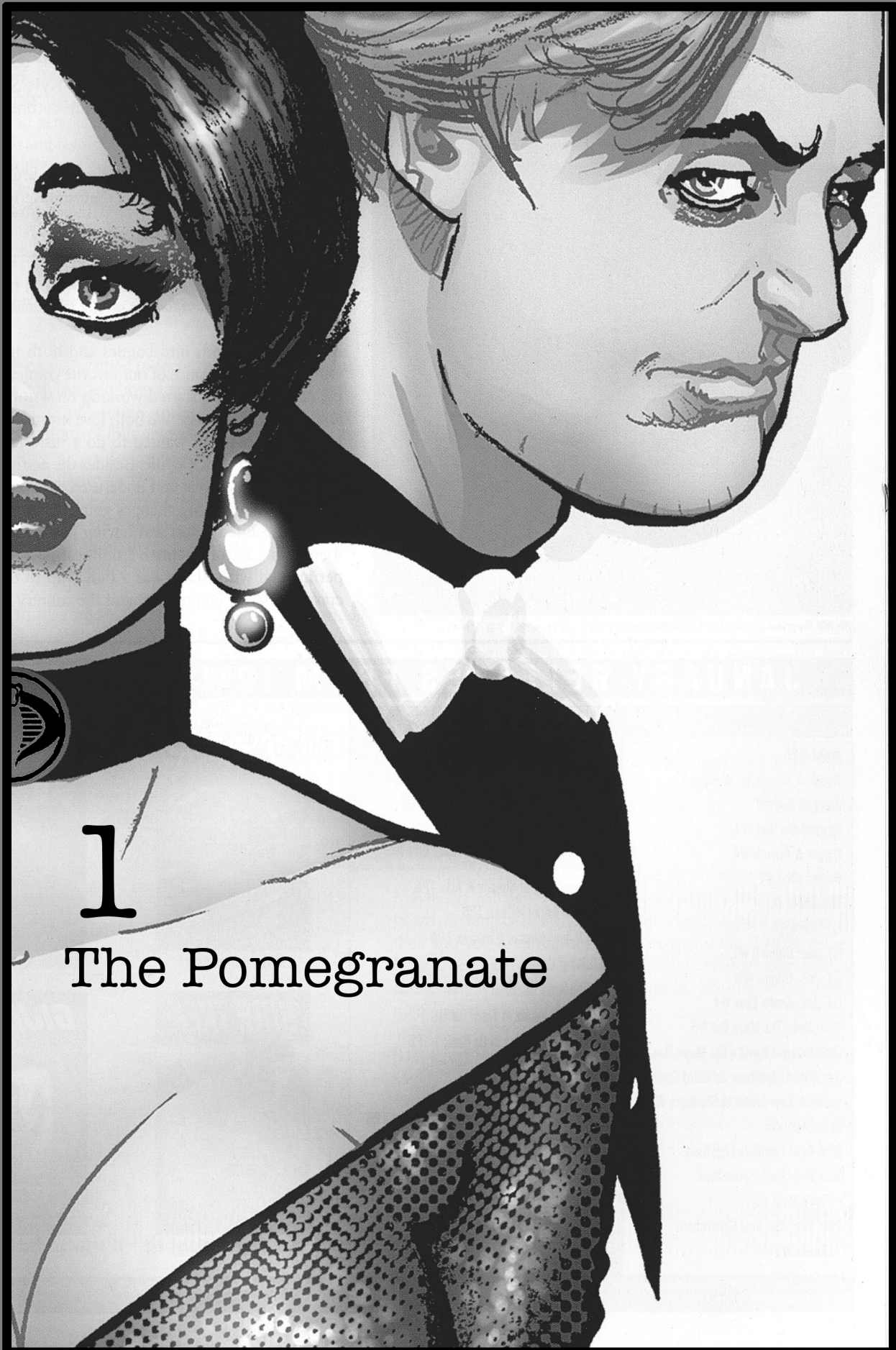
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1

The Pomegranate

The punica granatum fruit is ripe. It hangs from the tree branch: next to it another pomegranate fruit, smaller also hangs from the tree. In the afternoon light, they resemble Barent Vermeer's painting, Still-Life, the tone of color, the exactitude of the light and the attention to subtle detail. The skin of the fruit appears stretched to cover the impregnated bulb, its color, a mature red, which hints at the vivacious red jewels hidden within. The two bulging fruit stand out for their vibrant red hue and resemble two six-pointed stars with slightly yellow buds clustered in the middle. The persistent calyx of the larger fruit appears as a small explosion downward, bright green and yellow shoots of chlorophyll pointing outwards. Their green a indication of abundant rain, sun and rich soil.

A patio sits, with an overhanging wood sign that is engraved with the words "The Ponderosa Club." A swing hangs from a tree branch childless. Paint is flaking off of the home. There is no grass only dust. Light gleams off a black Honda Nighthawk motorcycle. The front door is open, the screen door is closed. Through the door, in the kitchen, a woman cuts a stick of butter. A child who looks to be about the age of six years old is also there playing with yellow Tonka trucks. He seems detached from his play because his eyes do not concentrate on the toys themselves. He seems distracted by whatever he is thinking about. There is a look of apprehension on his face; his brow is furled.

There are two pomegranate trees in the front entrance of the property. A long highway to a main road passes a cluster of trees, two of them yielding red bulbs. Fresh dust clouds settle from a recent passage of automobiles. The trees sit apart from the road and guard a dense cluster of trees, a sort of mini-forest. The road is partially covered by grey chip gravel that covers potholes and uneven parts. There are patches of grass, here and there, shooting up like fireworks. Some of these stalks are topped with a burst from a dandelion flower. At the end of the road there is a gate made of red painted boards. The red paint covers old streaks of blue and grey; peeling color.

A young boy leans against the tree in front of the house next to the rope swing. A denim baseball cap bill hovers above the child's eyes, casting a shadow as he looks toward the front of the property. His look is casual, indifferent as though he were not looking at anything in particular. He wears a striped shirt, white and red like a barber's pole. He also wears a jean shirt unbuttoned. A cloud of dust lingers around his ankle. His shoes are white and blue Nike sneakers. There is a dog, a white and black terrier like Lassie, only smaller and slightly dirty from the dust in the bare lot. The house and the barn stand behind the boy. From a lower angle, the boy seems to tower above the gates and the house. Both are covered in the shadow of trees.

The door to the basement is open, inside a snake is slithering out of the watery murk. The grass that grows around the basement door is wild and untamed, unruly shoots of blades that seem like they could easily cut a human hand. The paint around the door is flaked and peeling. Lying near the door off to the left is a rake and an empty bucket of paint. The house casts a shadow across the entrance and the heat of the sun shines down brightly. It animates everything with a harsh glare, unsuitable for long periods of exposure. A hose is coiled near a water spout without a handle and the grass shoots around the hose like sharp rows of green swords climbing toward the sun. A general feeling of neglect is aroused by the back of this home, so unattended; in a posh neighborhood, the paint would be new, the lawn would be manicured. On the Ponderosa club, however, there are no neighborly eyes in sight. The water flooding the basement evidences a lack of maintenance, but in a weird way it also symbolizes the freedom of indifference. One might wonder what lies beneath the placid water. Upon first glance, this home could have easily been abandoned by its owners. The paint is peeling over warped wood. In the grass around the cellar door there are toys. The collection of brightly colored construction toys litter the lawn here and there like easter eggs.

"SO, YOU WANT TO POACH ANOTHER ONE OF MY MEN FOR YOUR DREAM TEAM."

The ant hill is sitting in a thimble in size. Red and black ants are walking in all directions from the opening in the dirt. A few of these ants carry pieces of claimed food on their backs. The surrounding land is dry. Car tires are scattered on the left walls of patterned mud a few meters from the ant hill. The sun is shining down on this insect activity.

YOU REALLY NEED TO ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE ABOUT THIS, COLONEL. AND REMIND YOURSELF I'M A SUPERIOR OFFICER.

ARE YOU? I'M NOT SURE WE'RE EVEN IN THE SAME MILITARY ANYMORE.

Believe me and down the embankment here sharp nails jut from the street. The water runs, albeit smooth stones and pebbles. Zen garden. The water flows towards the open sewer cover yet another, bigger sewer. A crowdad with an exceptional looking claw rests with the ease of a local resident. Half in the water and half outside it, the crowdad looks as if it is about to catch a small prey. Nearby a dragonfly hovers above the water also appearing on the look-out for food. There is a well-traveled trail from the house to the creek. A yellow dump truck is left abandoned on the path.

YOU RECRUIT MY PEOPLE, GIVING ME NO CHOICE IN THE MATTER, AND NOBODY EVER HEARS FROM THEM AGAIN. THEIR FILES DISAPPEAR. IT'S LIKE THEY NEVER EXISTED.

OR I HEAR THEY'VE DIED. KIA, CAR ACCIDENTS, CANCER... PEOPLE IN THEIR TWENTIES, MIND YOU. WHICH MAKES YOU UNLUCKIER THAN THE HOPE DIAMOND.

AND NO ONE HAS ANY WAY OF KNOWING WHAT IT IS YOU'RE ACTUALLY DOING WITH THIS UNIT.

I'M TELLING YOU, GENERAL HAWK, PEOPLE ARE BECOMING LESS AND LESS OKAY WITH THIS.

The ranch style house is the main structure on the land. Next to it is a garage with old cars parked around it. There is a smaller structure with a serving window built into it. A man stands there in the shack pouring orange juice and vodka, for the thousand concert goers scattered around the yard. A young child who looks to be about eight years old is riding a plastic tricycle.

THE PRESIDENT IS OKAY WITH IT.

A man riding a motorcycle is heading towards the house. The boy waves while holding a construction truck toy in his other hand. There is a cloud of dust rising from the rear tire of the bike. The motorcycle is black and chrome. The child looks forward but his face cannot be seen. The sun is declining to the right. The pomegranate trees are blooming.

NOW IF YOU'RE THROUGH, I'VE SELECTED THIS ONE.

The boy and a young girl are crowded around a table. The boy is holding a napkin holding a pomegranate. The chair father sits is a cloth upholstered in a tasteless brocade. The two children are fascinated with what the father is holding. The little girl wears a light blue and white dress. The boy appears to be a few years older than the girl. He wears corduroys and a hooded t-shirt. A dim light radiates from the window. The trio of people consume pomegranate seeds. There is delight on the kids' faces and a hospitable look on the face of the father.

YOU'RE SURE THIS IS WHO YOU WANT?

THE CANDIDATES YOU HAD ME BRING INCLUDE MEN WHO HAVE MASTER'S DEGREES IN ENGINEERING, SPEAK FIVE LANGUAGES, AND CAN BULLSEYE SILVER DOLLARS AT FIFTY YARDS.

The duo of pomegranate trees are in bloom. They look like they were planted when other design plans were in the mind of the landowner, because they look forgotten and tucked out of the way of the road. The trees are hidden in plain sight, camouflaged by the untamed growth around them. Beyond the pomegranate trees towards the ranch house is a dirt road. A truck and a gold Chevy Nova are parked. The truck looks clean enough to have been driven recently but the Nova looks like it hadn't been driven for a few years. A standard California license plate is on the truck, while the Nova has none. A shepherd dog is running.

RIGHT MARTIAL ARTS TRAINING, RIGHT EXPERIENCE IN ESPIONAGE, AND THE RIGHT NATIONALITY. HAVE THE RECRUIT MEET ME IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM.

JUST ONE LAST THING, GENERAL...

A white moving van is parked in front of the ranch house, partly blocking the Ponderosa Club sign hanging over the patio. A tree swing hangs motionless from a large branch in the front yard. A boy is carrying a laundry basket full of belongings to the open rear of the moving van. A beautiful woman wearing a church dress is talking towards the boy to talk to the man. There are packages marked "Kitchen" and "Living Room". The screen door of the house is open. A male adult figure enters the hallway. There are more packages with ink labels on them. The night has gathered.

...I DON'T AGREE WITH WHAT YOU'RE DOING. I DON'T BELIEVE IN ALL THIS BELOW-BOARDS, SILENT-RUNNING CRAP. IT'S NOT AMERICAN. SERVICE TO COUNTRY IS SOMETHING TO BE HONORED, NOT HIDDEN.

YOU TAKE AWAY THESE PEOPLE'S LIVES FOR YOUR LITTLE PRIVATE WARS. ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, YOU'RE KILLING EVERY ONE OF YOUR SOLDIERS. AND AFTER TODAY, I'M NOT GOING TO BE PARTY TO IT ANY MORE.

The boy is holding a .22 caliber rifle that is oxidized and probably from moisture. It looked like the same color as barnacles on a piling in the ocean. The metal is caked and crumbling. He stands in front of a small house, not aware of the engorged pomegranate fruits hanging from the rickety tree behind him. A look of sheer surprise covers his face as he looks at the weapon.

GO GET MY RECRUIT.

Curiosity covers the face of the boy who looks at the pomegranate fruit berries, growing abundantly from the sapling. From the look on his face, it seems that he does not know what he is looking at. He also looks slightly annoyed. The town home behind him has shutters in the window that are closed. A concrete path cuts to the front door. The lone pomegranate tree is off to the side of the main entrance. Red concrete bricks encircle the tree on the ground in front of it. The boy's hand reaches toward one of the berries to pluck it from its branch. Around the duplex property there are palm trees. They are everywhere the eyes can see. There is a trash bin on the side of the house. The grass that grows here is sparse with dusty sand mounds and dry vegetation. The fence surrounding the residence is well made, its wood an unstained pine or birch. Few knots occupy the slats. The lower area of this partition is reinforced with a two by four inch horizontal support. Its unflattering side faces the boy, as if constructed by the owner of the neighboring property. The sky is blue, with patches of white clouds hovering above the tropical landscape. The boy is wearing coveralls and a grey hooded sweatshirt that reads "Cosmos" down the sides of each arm. A silk screen of a soccer ball covers the front of the boys sweatshirt. His shoes are hi-top basketball. His focus is on the hanging branches of the pomegranate tree. The tree seems to be asserting itself to the boy; its ripe produce is in easy reach from his position. The bark of the tree is jagged. It cuts inward into its trunk in little lines up and down the wood stem. An old Polaroid camera lies in the grass next to the tree, looking a little bit odd and out of place. It is in an old case, looking like it was rained on over and over again. The sun has dried it although the warping of its plastic suggests that it has been outside for a few months. The strap from the camera case lies in the grass as well, old and soiled. Upon closer examination of the boy's face, one can see that although he is interested as he gazes at the red bulb, his face also exhibits the kind of disinterest found in most intelligent children. With a mixture of awe and curiosity the boy gazes on the dark red bulbs hanging from the tree. His eyebrows are furled. His skin is bronzed as from long days in a sunny climate. The vegetation under his feet includes an aloe plant, its spiny foliage crushing beneath his shoes. The juice from one of the leaves oozes from the pressure of his weight. The fences from the neighborhood cut through in rectangles. Each one is distintively different in design, yet close enough to be considered an ensemble of friendly divides. The homes are mostly grey with yellow trim and white doors. The berries from the pomegranate tree contrast starkly, their red bulbs are ripe and inviting. The sky is relatively clear of rain clouds. The grass below is wet from a sprinkler. The mist from this sprinkler emits a moisture rainbow that sends shards of color into the air together with the penetrating light of the sun. A snail crawls up the trunk of the pomegranate tree. It is a curious sight because the snail is sideways as it slowly oozes its way upward toward the branches. Unobstructed, it looks likely that the crustacean will reach its goal. The only other creatures visible are the ever present crows, sitting on the fence facing both the boy and the pomegranate tree. Perhaps they have discovered the fruit already and wait for the boy to leave.



YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, SIR?

An look appears on this His arm is extend-
ll pitcher's throw
all is released. A
full-bodied ate is
headed towards the
separating the townhomes from an
adjacent driveway. The pome-
granate is blurred, fully in
motion, its only hindrance being
gravity. The red blur appears to
transcend and time, as it
occupies several coordinates.

YES, I DID,
SPECIALIST. YOU'VE
BEEN SELECTED TO
BE DEPLOYED ON A
SPECIAL MISSION.
EFFECTIVE
IMMEDIATELY.

IMMEDIATELY?
SIR, MY
FURLOUGH—

CANCELED.

The boy's face is filled with surprise
as he looks at the splatter of red on
the made from the pomegran-
ate, he threw moments before. He
has a look of recognition on his face
as if he has seen this scene before.
a figure in the window of
home looks outwards to-
wards the boy who stares in amaze-
ment at the red wine-colored splat-
ter. Some of the seeds from the
berry stick to pieces of wood on the
fence. Drip, drip, drip.

SIR...

DO YOU
KNOW WHO
I AM?

The boy is kneeling
at the base of the
fence; he seems to be
in the process of
picking up the
pieces of the broken
fruit. The seeds are
everywhere. One
might imagine that
these seeds could
grow more pome-
granate trees, if only
could burrow
into the
inches
trated
and rain.
where the pome-
granate hit the
fence, the mem-
brane of the berry is
visible. The white
and yellow yellow
buffer between the
seeds and the fruit's
skin is exposed like
a lung that has been
removed from its
cavity. He reaches
down to pick up the
pieces, cradling
them in his arm.

NO, SIR,
I DON'T.

GOOD. IF YOU
DID, I WOULDN'T
BE VERY GOOD AT
MY JOB. DO YOU
UNDERSTAND WHAT
I'M SAYING TO
YOU HERE?

The boy is running
through the front
door of the town
house, holding a
piece of me-
gaf
h
son
m
the
woman, every tug-
ging on her calf
length dress. The
little girl does not
appear to notice the
boy, bursting with ex-
citement. He holds
out the crushed shell,
red liquid dripping
down his wrist. His
grey soccer hoody
also has this red
water on the sleeve.
The elastic cuff is
stained. The tile on
the kitchen floor is
brown and white,
paisley in design and
scrubbed clean with
a glow. There is a
shepard dog outside.

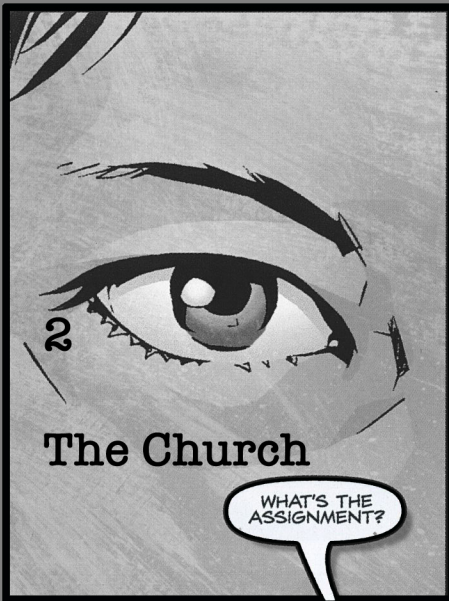
I COMMAND AN
ELITE UNIT WHO ARE THE
FINEST AT WHAT THEY DO.
THE ONE PERCENT OF THE
ONE PERCENT. WE ARE OFF
THE OFFICIAL BOOKS, BUT
OUR REQUISITION IS
ENORMOUS.

WE PERFORM
OUR MISSIONS SO YOU
AND THE PEOPLE YOU'RE
TRAINING WITH GET TO LIE IN
YOUR RACKS FOR ANOTHER SIX
MONTHS INSTEAD OF GOING
TO WAR WITH SOME NEW
TERRORIST-CONTROLLED
STATE.

The young girl and
boy sit eating the
pomegranate. They
sit on the edges of a
sofa and a chair in a
modest front room
with countryside
style paintings and a
TV. They are picking
at the red stained
paper towels that
hold the seeds. The
television is playing a
re-run of the show
Hawaii Five-O, men
dressed in obnoxious
suits from the early
80s. A detective's
gun is drawn and
pointed at an un-
known B-rated
actor; a bad guy with
both of his hands up
in the air. is a
cat of the
of the
calico
flea
need
on
The
spea
sume the pomegran-

THAT'S ALL I
CAN TELL YOU
UNTIL YOU AGREE
TO THE TRANSFER.
WHICH INVOLVES
YOUR LIFE AS YOU
KNOW IT CEASING
TO EXIST.

THE CHOICE IS
YOURS. EITHER PLAY
THE REAL GAME, OR GO
SIT ON THE BENCH WITH
THE SECOND-STRINGERS.
AND WE'LL CALL YOU WHEN
WE NEED YOU AND TEN
THOUSAND OF YOUR
FRIENDS TO MARCH
INTO A WAR ZONE FOR
THE SIX O'CLOCK
NEWS.



A child rests on one hand leaning back. With the other hand, he removes a homemade felt figure from the back of a red chair. **UNDERCOVER.** There is a velcro image of a wife and a farm house, a husband, a cow, corn crops, complete with budding yellow produce and green stalks. Adults sit in the pew above the child, playing on the red carpet of the church. A woman, presumably the boy's mother has a purse that seems to contain snacks and other random items. Items intended to keep a child occupied. There is a man worshipping in the pew next to the boys mother, hands raised.

A couple dance in front of a piano where a man plays the keys looking like he could be in a creative trance, his eyes are closed. His body looks a lot like Stevie Wonder. **WE HAD A MAN INFILTRATE A CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION LAST YEAR. THEY CALL THEMSELVES "COBRA."** The composition. A red burgundy carpet spreads from the piano to the front of the church. **IT WAS A BODY WE'D ONLY HEARD RUMORS OF BEFORE. HIS ACTIVITIES FINALLY CONFIRMED THEIR EXISTENCE, AND THEIR THREAT LEVEL.** feet extends to the wall behind a pulpit. There are other people also dancing to the left and down the aisles of the church. The signs to be a spirit of good will in the air. Everyone seems to be in a euphoric mood. The signs of the church are draped conspicuously along the walls of the building, red and orange letters reading, "Community Chapel."

A newspaper article lays on a desk. The text reads, "Burien Pastor's Doctrine -- 'Most Grievous Thing,' Says Charismatic." The paper reports that in the year of our Lord. The article goes on to state that a well-known evangelist is campaigning against the Community Bible Training Center, saying he believes the Burien pastor is teaching a doctrine that threatens the health of the church movement. **HIS COMMUNICATIONS GREW MORE AND MORE DISTURBING. FINALLY, THEY STOPPED.** Along this desk are the typical stationary items one would expect in an office, a fax, a stapler, sticky notes etc. Besides these bookkeeping items there are black Bibles. **AFTER HIS HANDLER ALSO DISAPPEARED, WE HAD TEAMS MOVE INTO HIS LAST KNOWN LOCATION. THE PARAMILITARY INSTALLATIONS HAD BEEN DESTROYED. NO TRACE OF ANYTHING OR ANYONE.**

A boy positions GI Joe toys while sitting on the ground in a corner of the church. Noticeably missing is Cobra Commander. He appears not so much to play with figures as to position them in tactical defensive and offensive formations. Among these GI Joe figures are Snake Eyes, Scarlett, Road Block, and Bazooka Soldier. He also has a "Mauler," an all terrain tank near his feet. There are a few other children who are walking by, one of them peers at the boy's ensemble of toys. The boy is wearing a white courderoys and a white dress shirt tucked in. Over his shoulders is a navy blue hooded jacket with draw strings. On his feet he wears tennis shoes, the kind that have a kangaroo on them with a zipper pocket. **FOUND THE CORPSE OF THE HANDLER IN A MASS GRAVE.** on its

The boy walks down the incline past men and women shipping their Lord be with their hands, passing the air. The experience of the boy's face is determined if he had a destination in mind. He carries his toys in a bag. His shirt is untucked, half of it creating a triangle of pin-striped white above his courderoys. The people praying next to where he is walking seem completely oblivious to him. The boy's hair is tousled in the way that a young boy's hair does. He has a cowlick that makes strands of hair stick

"CHUCKLES."
"JINX." I'M
ASSUMING THESE
ARE CALL
SIGNS.

THEY'RE
NAMES. THE
ONLY ONES OUR
PEOPLE HAVE.
YOURS IS ON
PAGE ONE.

The boy walks past the pianist belt local notes above a piano. The singers face is grueling and pained, excreting emotions on a spiritual level. Sweat drips from his forehead. His collar is soaking from perspiration. A patch of wet ovals mark the front of his shirt. He is wearing cargo shorts, notably different in style from the formal clothing and necktie he also wears. The piano is gleaming, shining, black and beautiful. The lights above glow in the reflection of this grand piano.

HM. SORTA
SILLY, HUH?

From inside the prayer room, the outline of the boy can be seen in the doorway. The church is visible behind him, with women twirling their sun dresses while bopping to the pianist's solo. In front of the boy the entrance to the prayer room is dark, very dark. There are a few lamps on the wall that illuminate the cavity of the room, a dungeon maze.

Dimly lit wall lamps shed light in the prayer hall. Benches for kneeling and praying form an interesting labyrinth of nooks and levels. There are steps up and down the hexagonal room. There is people in the corners, wearing suits and women wearing summer more conservative attire. There are also prayer guides on a kneeling stoop. There are no other children in this space besides the boy. He looks blankly at the people, who do not notice him.

SO, WHAT
YOU WANT ME
TO GO IN AND
TRY TO MAKE UP
FOR LOST TIME?
INFILTRATE THIS
ORGANIZATION
MYSELF AND START
SENDING YOU BACK
INTELLIGENCE?

NO.

The boy carries a light jacket in his left hand and in his right he holds a black Bible. His back is visible as he descends a stairway to the corner. He is in midstep as he leans forward. His face cannot be seen, his hair is matted, as if he recently woke from sleep, but his clothes are without folds or creases, which suggest that he has not recently slept. The other possibility that had slept but changed his clothes. He is wearing blue courderoys, probably a pair that his mom or dad bought because children do not usually dress themselves at this age. The dim lamps along the walls provide an almost hallucinogenic environment, ceding a space that appears both contemplative and spiritual, if not religious. Down towards the corner where the young boy is headed, the only light is from the walls. The scene has a solitude about it, yet it has a duality both frightening and peaceful.

OUTSIDE OF
COBRA ITSELF,
NO ONE KNOWS
MORE ABOUT ITS
INNER WORKINGS
THAN CHUCKLES. WE
CAN'T REPRODUCE
THAT INTEL. HE IS
THE ASSET
HERE.

YOUR
MISSION IS
TO GO IN AND
RETRIEVE
HIM.

The security guard stands front and center. He wears a navy blue jacket with a security firm badge on the chest. The look in his eyes are kind and neutral, an expression security guards often have. His hair sticks out from under his hat in tufts. His clothes are not pressed and his shirt happens to be comfortably unbuttoned at the collar, revealing not an undershirt, but bare skin. He is holding a flashlight and politely points its glare toward the ground and obviously not in the eyes of the onlooker. However disheveled his suit may appear it was made from the finest industrial uniform fabrics, indicated by the yellow stitching on the pockets and the brass trimming along the black buttons. The uniform is a deep navy. The security guard's shoes are spit shined gleaming. Behind the security guard the foyer of the church is empty. He has probably been hired to protect the church from intruders while it was not being used for worship. His expression shows genuine concern.

IT ALL JUST FEELS TOO EASY.

In front of the church, in the emergency lane is a police car. Its lights project red and blue on the massive slabs of glass that make the outer wall of the church. The police car is a cruiser, white with a light across the middle. There is a silver shield with the words, "Burien Police" written inside of it in gold. It is a 1984 Chrysler Enforcer. The paint is a gloss white with the police insignia on the door in royal blue. The flashing police lights look nearly identical to a matchbox or a hot wheels car, classic and timeless. The tires on the car are utilitarian. The chrome wheels look new but not ostentatious.

SECURITY WAVES ME THROUGH.

A man with a distinct resemblance to the face of the boy sits in a white pickup behind the flashing police car. The man has a blond beard, a handsome face and wears a Levi's jean jacket lined with red, white, and grey flannel. He looks visibly annoyed while he sits in the light duty white pickup. He looks as if he ready to speak to the officer in front of him. His facial expression relays one of submissiveness; the kind of expression that does not project either ineptitude or aggression. He is looking toward the lights. The flashing can be seen in his pupils.

THE TURRET CAMERAS DON'T SPIN IN MY DIRECTION.

The man and the boy stand while talking to a police officer and the security guard. The adjuncts standing in the foyer don't even make eye contact. Just like that, I'm in. The red and blue lights provide a kaleidoscopic reflection, splashing the light on the four bodies facing and talking in the night. The boy does not look upset, nor is he overly apologetic in his stance, arms folded, legs crossed. The cop has his hands on his belt like a samurai and the father of the child has a neutral body stance, hands barely showing themselves from his jeans pockets. The night is black. The street lamps illuminate the darkness of the parking lot.

THE ADJUNCTS STANDING IN THE FOYER DON'T EVEN MAKE EYE CONTACT. JUST LIKE THAT, I'M IN.

The boy and the man are driving in the white truck. They both look straight ahead into the lamps of the headlights spilling into the road ahead. The sky is dark, but the headlights of the car illuminate the street signs that are ahead of them. There is a no parking sign and a 45 mile per hour speed limit sign. Deciduous trees line the winding road. The trees have been planted deliberately. These are not wild trees. A few traces of typical litter protrudes from the sewer, a ditch alongside the sidewalk. The interior of the vehicle is visible. It is the interior of economy vehicle, no leather or custom pin striping, just grey cloth to cover the seats. An AMPM gas station soda cup rests in between the boy and the man. The cup appears to be empty. The man driving the white Toyota pick up and the boy riding in the passenger seat do not speak to each other. Here, as previously, the boy is devoid of emotion in his expression. He looks detached. The exterior surrounding the pickup are

I'VE SPENT THE LAST FIVE YEARS TRAVELING AROUND THE WORLD WITH TOMAX AND XAMOT PAOLI. I'VE SEEN THEM DESTABILIZE NATIONS, BANKRUPT CORPORATIONS, AND ASSASSINATE ANYONE IN THEIR WAY.

...e of the northwest. Shedded pine needles these grassy ditches are knolls rather than ...ve in Southern California. Above the top of the truck, is a mountain range, barely visible in the night sky. A green speedometer illuminates the dark dash of the two seater pickup truck.

The only other I HAVE NO IDEA HOW I GOT HERE. ...ttness is the knob on the cigarette lighter. The man who drives the car is wearing a full beard, yet trimmed. His hair is sandy blonde or perhaps brown. His clothes are utilitarian; they have oil stains on them, probably from working in a mechanic shop. There is nothing in their way as they drive down a windy road with forest trees on eitherside of them. The pickup seems to be doing a good job of lighting the way and penetrating the empty space. It is a light, commercial truck intended to complete light hauls for landscaping or lumber. There are several items in the bed of the truck: a gasoline can and a toolbox strapped down with bolts and a padlock for security. There is a layer of rust alongside the base of the cargo area. It looks natural as if the rust coexisted with the truck before. In front of the truck and to the side, there is a small family of racoons just beyond the trees and the headlights of the truck. The parent stands on its hind legs as if to shield the younger, smaller ones from the oncoming vehicle. There are two smaller racoons and a larger, presumably male one behind them all. The male is under a pine needle branch. The racoons would not have been easy to detect, except the female and the two smaller ones making a kit, have their eyes reflecting in the light, which gives away their position. Each of their coats are black and silver, with stripes down their backs. Only the mother's claws are visible and she stands blocking her young. It does not appear as if the man or the boy are cognizant of the wild life that shares the night with them. The man and the boy traveling in the night in a economy pick up truck will pass these creatures in a few mere seconds. The way that the background is blurred shows that they are travelling quickly and will not have time to appreciate the wildlife family ensembled before them. The nocturnal creatures look as if their only concern is to avoid the lights shining on.

AND ALREADY MY WEEK IS OFF TO A WONDERFUL START.

There is a bunk bed with a blonde girl looking in though the room. There is also another bed in the room with another child, awake and looking on as the boy steps into the room. The bunk bed has a child's quilt on the top and bottom levels. A patterned fabric with cotton burrs here and there boasts an intricate design with orange and blue polyhedrons. The quilt below is the uglier one of the two. For some reason the artist of the quilt used a pea-green and a pink color for the sewn patches. The thread used on this is yellow. The blonde girl looks down from the top bunk, peering on, yet obviously sleepy. She appears happy that the boy has returned to the abode. He does not seem excited, standing in the doorway. He looks around the room in a controlled way, as if he is not subject to all the emotions spilling out into the room.

BARONESS!

THIS IS MY LEAST FAVORITE— AND MOST FREQUENT— CONVERSATION. I'M SURE THIS SLIMY BROWNNOSER KNOWS EXACTLY WHO I AM. HE JUST WANTS TO GAWK.

NO. I'M ERIKA LE TENE. ADJUNCT TO MR. PAOLI AND MR. PAOLI.

OH. I'M SORRY. BUT, TRULY, THE LIKENESS IS... UNCANNY.

3

The Infinite Sidewalk

I SEE THESE KINDS OF MEN EVERY YEAR AT THIS SUMMIT. A CHIEF OF STAFF FOR THE ESTATE.

Sidewalk extends into the banquet hall. Someone to organize the banquets, make sure the servants do their jobs perfectly and invisibly, and coordinate with all the adjuncts.

typical Southern Californian landscape. There is a skateboard on the sidewalk. It rests immobile, isolated, without its rider. Blue striped grip tape covers the board, alternating like a barber's head and white hair. The skateboard has wear and tear on it.

CAN I HELP YOU?

THEY ALWAYS ASK ME THE SAME QUESTIONS. BUT IT'S NEVER THE SAME MAN TWICE. THE JOB HAS A HIGH TURNOVER RATE.

around a homemade skateboard launch ramp. Yes, your itinerary. watching another young child suspended in the air, feet on his board. His hand grabs the nose of the board. Skateboard logo adhesives achieve a luggage look on the side of the ramp. There are "Bones Brigade," Powell Peralta," and "Tony Hawk" stickers

PROBABLY BECAUSE THEY'RE ALWAYS SUCH INCORRIGIBLE GOSSIPS.

to the back of a truck, hitching a ride to wherever he is. His white Nike shoes are scuffed badly. His Varaflex skateboard is purple and gold. He holds on to the tailgate of the economy class truck, ducking out of the way of the unknowing driver's view. Behind him, an image of the actor Michael J. Fox holds onto the rear of the car to travel on his skateboard, surrounded by the night sky, filled with stars. Projectors of the film play on a silver screen. In front of the screen, cars are parked with couples and families inside them watching an evening showing of pop-culture. The houses in the background are mostly rambler middle-class homes. They are tract housing with the most variance between them coming from differential paint covering the walls and siding. Marty McFly's clothing embodies the aesthetic in California, jeans and a collared shirt with the same worn-in, tough guy style. His gear is a nice match with the clouds.

ALSO... MR. PAOLI IS HERE, BUT HIS BROTHER HASN'T ARRIVED YET. IS THAT... USUAL?

An array of Californian style clothes and skateboard products are displayed on hangers. Surfer shorts tend to the knee. Another pair of George Jetson themed shorts as well, one side with the cartoon character on them, the other a solid color. There are Vision street wear shoes, black with a rubber ollie guard on the toes. Some of the products seem related strictly to a Californian skateboard lifestyle and others less so. For instance, Mr. Zogg's Sex Wax (surfboard wax grip) or mushroom BMX bicycle grips are not made for skateboarding, yet they are grouped here with the other items. A pair of the first Nike Jordan's are present.

THEY'VE BEEN TRAVELING SEPARATELY. IS THAT A PROBLEM?

From the position of the glaring sun it appears to be around ten or eleven in the morning. A semi-retail style booth with skateboards stacked one upon another. A boy and what appears to be his father consider a red skateboard. The child is holding in front of himself. The boy's body language indicates that he hopes his father approves of the wooden skateboard, which has a picture of Rambo holding an M-16 in the air in triumph. A sign behind the booth reads, "Poway Swap Meet." The people shopping are tanned from the sun. Most wear sunglasses.

NO! NO! OF COURSE NOT.

BUT WE DO HAVE A REQUEST FOR YOU. THE CROC MASTER'S ADJUNCT HAS... MET WITH AN ACCIDENT.

The boy holds his chin in his hands. The skateboard is in the grass. There is blood on the sidewalk, presumably where he crashed. The sidewalk is a steep incline leading up the hill to the next house. Apparently the skateboarding accident took place on the sidewalk and may have turned into the concrete driveway. The tropical shrubbery indicates the location is in Southern California. There is an immaculately cared for light blue Honda Accord sitting in the driveway. An air freshner hangs from the rear view mirror. Its bumper sticker reads, "I'd rather be sunfishing."

SINCE YOU'RE CURRENTLY ONE LIGHT, WE WERE HOPING YOU COULD SUPPORT US THERE.

WE NEED HIM TO ATTEND THE FIRST ARRANGEMENT BANQUET TONIGHT. PERHAPS YOU COULD... PERSUADE HIM?

Kids launch their boards off of fly ramps, caught in mid-air doing all sorts of tricks. A man is yelling and encouraging the kids from his automobile as he drives by. The kids acknowledge him with arms waving above their heads. One of the kids executes a perfect McGill grab; he holds the nose of his skateboard while it launches into the air. Behind the kids is a middle school, whose walls are littered with graffiti. The tags read names like, "Shorty" and "Pico." The defacement covers the school's outer walls, so that there is also writing on the emergency fire extinguisher case.

Green and black digital hands crush the earth on the obverse of a skateboard. An atomic nuclear cloud explodes upwards from the globe. In the blooming radioactive cloud Jeff Kendall is mantled in the upper zone of the board. The skateboard has no sliding rails, yet holes are where the hardware would be. The board is hovering above an artificial backdrop, the background of a product photographed in a professional studio. This image of the board gives the feeling of something sacred or revered; the idol resting on an alter in an adventure movie or a diamond necklace under a glass case.

ONE OF OUR MEMBERS LESS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BUSINESS WORLD. HIS QUARTERS ARE IN THE EAST WING.

A man and the boy are applying blue grip tape to the freshly sanded skateboard. They are in a garage where tools for car repair are neatly organized on the wall. The shape of each tool is outlined on the pressboard behind it. It appears the area where the skateboard is being operated on was cleared to make room for this project, because only the work area is clear of clutter. Other surfaces have car parts on them.

The child and teenagers look like something out of a small advertisement. All of their clothes are colorful and trendy and brand new. Kids stare on as another kid executes a trick on his skateboard. Some of them stand with one foot on their skateboards poised to kick off and glide across the smooth concrete. Another boy is sweeping small rocks with a shop broom in front of the wood launch ramp.

A woman shops in a fabric store. Rows of colorful prints occupy the aisle. She wears a full length conservative flower imaged dress, while pulling on an embroidered Californian theme print. There are no other shoppers in the fabric store. The fonts used on the signs in this store, mostly Cooper Black style lettering, suggest that it is the late 80's. The signs communicate the price of the fabric. The woman manages her shopping cart while perusing a palm tree patterned textile. She has a look of concentration on her face that lies somewhere between leisure and chore. The sun is bright outside, so it must be a few hours before evening. A few cars are visible in the parking lot through the main picture window, namely a sun bleached Volkswagen Beetle and another German sedan, possibly an Audi or a Mercedes. The vehicles look like they were recently washed.

Three pairs of homemade Californian shorts are laid out for display, the first is a red fabric, with passport style pictures on it and palm trees. The second depicts pencils and pens scribbling colorful lines. The third pair depict shapes in an alphabet block style ensemble. Triangles with graphic sketches and squares with individual letters in primary colors. Alongside these garments are several hooded sweatshirts made from a material that looks like fleece, soft and comfortable. One is yellow with white drawstring cords and the other is a deep maroon with black drawstrings tied together in a loop. The boy looks on while a woman, probably his mother is sewing. He appears anxious and happy at the same time. His mother looks content and occupied. Her hair is pinned up and her dress is red with yellow flowers. The light comes from the two lamps focused over the antique sewing machine.

The sidewalk like the endless sidewalk. It delineates apartment buildings. It delineates schools and businesses. It goes on and on and on. On either side of this sidewalk are palm trees. There are no humans or animals in the present; a ghost sidewalk. A fog hovers above it like a spirit.

A birds eye flight pattern show the from San Diego to the dashed lines like a pirate's map. In the map the dashed lines the plane in mid air heard the direction of the plane in Seattle. The map looks everthing like a pirate's map, dashed lines and a red "x" on the destination, as if there was a bounty to be found. A dot indicates "City of Seattle." Northeast of Seattle is a dot marked "City of Bothell." The tattered map curls at the edges. It seems slightly burnt.

IT WAS THEIR FAULT FOR SENDING A PLUMP ONE THE LAST TIME.
I COULD TELL WHAT THEY WERE THINKING, AND I KNEW I SHOULDN'T, BUT I ASK YOU, COULD YOU RESIST THAT FACE?

Pine trees surround a camp site, which has a campfire in the middle of it next to a four-person capacity trailer with a canvas roof that flares out at each end. Parked on a kickstand is a boys black and blue BMX bike. The fire is burning healthily. Not a being is visible, but a black and white collie dog is tied to a wooden bench, sitting with its forelegs facing the fire. All around the fire are pine needles, blanketing the ground like a luscious carpet. Other camp sites can be seen behind and to the side of this camp site. There are two lodgings with small tents, orange and military green below the clear sky.

FELT BAD AFTER.
DISAPPOINTING, STRINGY.
BUT, SPILLED MILK.

The boy and his skateboard are on a sidewalk. This sidewalk is not suitable for riding a skateboard; it has a design that leaves gaps in the path that would break the rider. The boy is at the fore of the trailer park where he is in a room. There is a door marked Bathroom/Shower and a window looking into a dry-mat with old People magazines and newspapers on a table. There is nothing luxury about the laundromat or the trailer park.

THE--THE CHIEF OF STAFF ASKED ME TO CONFIRM YOUR ATTENDANCE AT THE FIRST ARRANGEMENT BANQUET. CAN I TELL HIM TO EXPECT YOU?

DON'T LIKE LEAVING THEM.

A rectangular arrangement of desks occupies the center of a classroom. The boy and his desk are set aside from rest of the students. They are fourth grade as indicated by a sign on the wall that reads, "Mr. Nelson's 4th Grade." A overweight man with his belly hanging over his waist line is probably Mr. Nelson because he stands proudly in front of these children holding a book.

THEY'RE VERY BEAUTIFUL, SIAMESE AND SALTWATER, IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN.

YES, ENDANGERED, THE SIAMESE.

THEY'LL BE WELL TAKEN CARE OF IN YOUR ABSENCE. I'LL SEE TO IT PERSONALLY.

The overweight teacher the boy pinned against the wall in a bathroom. The boy stands before the teacher indignantly back at the apparently angry educator. There is no emotion in the boy's face of pure hatred and he has a cool demeanor of someone who has repeatedly been the subject of abuse. The man has a "Hello my name is..." nametag on his shirt that reads, Mr Nelson, 4th Grade. The face of the teacher named Mr. Nelson is visble in the sink mirror. His expression is evil, brow furrowed. Blood has rushed to his face. He seems upset and has chosen the boy as a target for his anger. The water faucet is running. The inside of this small bathroom is painted flat yellow. The tile on the floor is white ceramic with grey floral design. The sink is stainless steel.

HOPE SO, WE LIKE YOU BETTER THAN THE LAST ONE.

CAREFUL LEAVING, THERE'S A SLOPE, WOULDN'T WANT TO SLIP.

I CAN'T STOP SHAKING.
I WANT TO SCREAM.

women are inside the trailer, an angry look on both of their faces. They appear to argue. Two children are at close quarters, lying down on one side of the trailer. They do not look indifferent to the situation. There is a look of fear on their faces. They are both lying on a tarp of each other in their own sleeping bags, one pine green, the other tarp blue. The adults are oblivious to the children, because they are not looking at the children while they yell at each other. There are things spilled on the small floor of the trailer, like apples and canned foods. It looks as if they were toppled from the open cupboard shelf above. The interior of the trailer is orange and brown pinstriping on manila walls with brown faux leather on the seat cushions. The sink is centrally located next to a small door that might be the bathroom. Paper cups and plastic forks rest on one of the kitchen shelves. There is also a box of vegetable based fruit snacks in Loony Tunes cartoon theme sitting next to the picnic-ware. Had it not been for this argument the environment would have been peaceful.

FIVE YEARS WITH THE PAOLIS, YOU
SEE SOME NASTY THINGS. I'M NOT
A FOOL. I KNOW WE WORK WITH
SOME HORRIBLE PEOPLE.

BUT THIS PAST YEAR HAS SEEN
A CHANGE I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
I'VE NEVER SEEN SOMETHING
LIKE THAT BEFORE.

Don't fire in a trailer park. There is a fire of about 24 white and blue cassette tapes burning in the fire. It gives off a black oily smoke, the kind that plastic gives off under combustible temperature. The man is wearing a jean jacket coat, the kind with white cotton lining. He pokes the fire with a stick while sparks fly like mini-fireworks into the black night. The light from the campfire spreads illumination around the campsite. It feels like some one else should be there with him, but there is no one: no dog, children or spouse.

HAVE TO COLLECT MYSELF.
CAN'T SHOW WEAKNESS HERE.

A tombstone stands on its own, surrounded by dirt. The tombstone reads, "Here lies

THERE ARE MONSTERS
AROUND EVERY CORNER.

log born in Escondido, California. The boy and apparently, a young girl that appears to be his little sister sit idly next to the grave. They both have no recognition of death on their faces; neither of them appear to have been touched by the vicissitudes of life. They sit with their backs to the

WHAT THE
HELL ARE YOU
DOING?

small family prop-up trailer. Their clothes are late 80's fare, Varnet and Swatch watches. A thought seems to be shared on both of their faces. The woman sways outside of the trailer behind the grave, which is a little off to the left. A man looks noble and haggard simultaneously. He holds a shovel in his hand. The dirt on the grave by the tombstone is fresh and damp. The dew on the ground is still moist from the morning. The sky above is a massive grey spread of clouds. If it were cold enough these clouds are the same ones that would produce snow, blanket-like and stretching to the horizon. The embers from the campfire are giving off verticities and curls of smoke, even after it has been smouldered with ash. There is no one seeking the warmth of the coals, although it looks as if the fire could be restarted easily by poking at the glowing log.

The trailer park looks like a skateboard park. The boy holds the blue striped griptape Santa Cruz skateboard in his hands. There are no smooth sidewalks to skateboard on, just pebbles and dirt. A car passes the boy holding the board, an older model dodge van. The park is a "Good Sam" trailer park denoted by a cartoon-style sign of a man with a halo above his black hair. The address on the sign above the office also declares that the address of the park is in Canyon Park, Bothell, Washington. There are trees alongside the exit to the park. They are pine needle trees with deformed trunks, bending every way.

I—I WAS—

The boy rides a black bike with a banana seat up trail covered in bark. He has an expressive light on his face and body language. One tire is elevated into the air from his rear tire. Some of the dirt is arching aerially toward the back of his Member's Only grey windbreaker. The bike is in good condition. It has blue letters on the main part of the frame that read Trail Trekker. On either side of the boy are campsites.

SHUT UP.
LOOK AT YOU, YOU'RE FILTHY, AND I COULD HEAR YOU SNIVELING FROM THE HALL.

A skateboard is in the hands of a boy a few inches taller as he starts that reads, Cedar Park Christian School. The children, whom appear to be on a lunch break or at a recess are well dressed, but have varied outfits. Twin brothers, both on their own skateboards are distracted by doing tricks, one in midair, the other crouching to spring his board into the air. The latter is attempting a basic trick called an "ollie." The racial mix of kids is somewhat diverse; a mostly white group with two asians and a Black female student in a yellow floral dress. A redheaded girl with freckles is sprinting across the lot.

JUST BECAUSE WE HAVE A HISTORY, NOW I HAVE TO PAY FOR IT EVERY DAY OF MY LIFE?

BS are on the parking sign. The boy and the two male twins mess of vandalizing this sign, which now communicates the "Bikers Rule Bikers Suck." One of the twins is acting as a look out and the other show their backs as they mark the sign with markers. To the right of these three, there is a woman who, staring at them in concern. She is only far enough away to see that the kids look suspicious, but perhaps, does not know what they are doing. There is a childseat jutting in view through the Volvo window.

THERE ARE LIMITS TO MY PATIENCE. I GOT YOU THIS POSITION, YOUR ACTIONS REFLECT ON ME.

I SWEAR TO GOD IF YOU EMBARRASS ME IN FRONT OF THESE PEOPLE, I WILL KILL YOU MYSELF. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?

Lost in thought, the boy is sitting on a bench. The memories and him in dreamy, billowy clouds. In one of the clouds, he on a bodyboard (a bodyboard is a flotation device used to ride waves in the ocean surf). Another image in this cloud is a much older version of the boy in a library. The books are of varied colors and are in multiple volumes. The table or desk is utilitarian and has a lean unstained oak surface. The younger version of the seated boy is not looking up at this hovering image; he looks away.

IT'S DISGUSTING I HAVE TO COME HERE—INTO THE TOILETS FOR THE HELP—AND SAY THIS TO YOU, PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER.



A lone cactus is to the left. A lone cactus is to the right. A last lone cactus is farther in the horizon and a nubby desert hill in the distance. The sun appears to be rising. The colors are more focused without the spread-out dust and smog apparent in sunsets. If one looks close enough at the details there are four brown desert birds or swallows in the foreground, next to a tumble weed bush. They

...DO ONE THING RIGHT.

A thick square-headed teenager stands in front of an aging townhouse apartment building with four units. He looks to be about fourteen and holds a smug expression on his face. His hands are in his pocket, a casual gesture. The townhouse behind him is aging, its white paint is flaking off in so many places, around the window, the trim, and on the front door. He does not look too bright and he is missing life in his eyes, common in mischevious kids.

Three objects sit in a curious arrangement. Each h... one plane. To the left a desert rose, and third a scale con... in icons or images related to... In fact, the scale resembles closely the scales of Lady Justice, and also blindfolded as if to suggest that evidence must be weighed on its own merit. She holds a sword of determination in her right hand, scales in her left. The scales are immaculate. Every reflective detail is illustriously produced. The pans of the scales shine as polished metal should. The light emmiting creates shine and shadow over the six chains holding the pans. There is nothing in the pans, they are empty. The rose is unlike the other two objects. It is pink and freshly picked. Moisture still resides on its petals and thorns. The flower part of the rose is bright, but with streaks of white in a few petals. Like the scales, which are rich in detail. The rose is lifelike, pretty.

AH, MISS LE TENE. HOW LOVELY TO SEE YOU.

OH, MR. PAOLI. I HAVE YOUR ITINERARY.

An old style package of Pall Mall cigarettes lies on its side, open, with a few butts spilling out on an oak table. A telephone is connected to the wall, its receiver... down on the wood surface. The color of the phone is neon blue. There is a comforting look to the scratched table contrasting with the bright phone; new and old together, technology and poverty. Besides the table with the phone on it, the boy and his freind appear to be conspiring, whispering and huddled, as if discussing the last play of a game.

HM. PERSONALITY CONFLICT? WELL, CAN'T SAY I DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT.

To one side there is a young woman. On the other there are two boys. Both parties are talking on phones. The two boys show great interest and are cradled around a hall table, trying to listen. It appears someone was recently playing Yahtz, there are five white dice on the table with golf pencils and a green cloth. There are also plastic place mats at all but one of the four seats around the table. There are people in the pictures on the wall: they are all unfamiliar.

SO, PLEASE REMEMBER. SHOULD YOU EVER NEED A SYMPATHETIC EAR...

Two boys are riding a "Torker 2" freestyle bicycle towards the right. A younger boy is standing on the back pegs--he holds the shoulders of an older, bigger set boy. Dust blows in the wind around them as they speed on the suburban sidewalk. They both seemed determined to go wherever they are going. Behind them there is a Dairy Queen hamburger restaurant and a 7-eleven, where two homeless men stand. They appear to be homeless because they are wearing the clothes that homeless men wear; unwashed t-shirts, dirty jeans, and luggage, whether a backpack or a suitcase with a handle. One of the men is throwing a glance at the two boys speeding by on a bicycle. The man looks at them lazily.

...OR ANY OTHER PART...

A young woman stands casually. She appears to be about fourteen years old. She is looking at the greeting cards in what appears to be a drugstore. She is not wearing anything provocative, just a t-shirt and a pair of low-fashion Levi's. The greeting cards that she is looking at are on a wire spindell. It circulates when it is spun and it is well stocked.

I... THANK YOU. THAT'S VERY KIND.

OH GOD...

The older boy looks back mischievously with his finger on his lips in a hush gesture. It is apparent that he is sneaking up on a young tom-boyish girl to surprise or scare her. The merchandise in this drugstore are the usual products that one would find in such a store, summertime commodities, such as floaties for kids in a pool or life vests.

YES. IT IS, HELLO, BROTHER.

MS. LE TENE. I AM NOT IN THE HABIT OF APOLOGIZING FOR MY BROTHER, BUT CERTAINLY XAMOT'S BEHAVIOR LATELY HAS US ALL MAKING ADJUSTMENTS. YOU WON'T BE A PROBLEM FOR US?

NO, NO, OF COURSE NOT, MR. PAOLI. WONDERFUL.

the girl are a flight of connected stairs. She holds her hand sort of drapes over his. The carpet is brown. There are portraits of a family, probably the girl's, on the wall leading upstairs. The girl is in one of the photographs with five other people in a domestic setting. Her expression is one of anticipation and calculated determination. Her confidence is visible. and her eyes are steady.

THIS PAST YEAR...

AND DO CHANGE CLOTHES BEFORE THE BANQUET, YES?

...THINGS ARE BAD. AND GETTING WORSE.

The younger boy and the older boy are riding duo on the bike, now facing the opposite direction. The older boy is scowling. They are on the sidewalk in front of a Burger King fast food restaurant. An employee of this establishment is looking wearied and smoking a cheap cigarette. The garbage can next to him is greasy with oil and black streaks of residue, probably from the potato fryer. There is a look of accomplishment on the younger youth's face, as if he found his parent's liquor stash. The younger boy riding the pegs is clothed in fashionable attire. His shoes are Nike and his t-shirt displays a graphic: A man riding a horse. The older boy is wearing a non-descript blue jacket and a pair of jeans. He also wears a well-worn pair of Fila high-top style basketball shoes. The bicycle they ride on is a kaleidoscope pattern of blue and white graphics with the words Torker 2 on the frame. The spokes on this bike gleam in the noon sun. The neighborhood appears to be middle class. The lawns are manicured and there is no litter in the water drains. The sidewalks look well-made. Two parked cars are in good condition.

A man sits angrily in a 1979 Alfa Romeo coupe, black with burgundy leather. A young girl is riding in the passenger seat. The boy is balancing doorside on his bike looking at the man driving the vintage sports car. The girl sits quietly, not disapprovingly or neither approvingly. It is as if she has no judgment on the situation. The man driving the sports car is looking angrily at the younger boy. He sits up in his chair, scowling. He wears a flannel shirt, sunglasses and a hat. The older boy looks unconcerned and stands idly.

In the interior of an apartment bathroom, the boy is laying next to a teenage girl. Both of them have their jeans on. They are not cuddled but seem content with just being next to each other on the tile floor. There are inexpensive toiletries sitting on the counter and on the toilet. Pink shag covers the seat.

Inside what seems to be the interior of a church, the boy is in the arms of a teenage young woman. They are locked at the mouth, both have shut their eyes for the kiss. The room seems designated for breast feeding and changing baby diapers. The girl looks much more experienced than the boy. She appears to be about six years older than him. The window facing into the church is tinted, so that no one can look in and all who look out are protected. The lights in this room are dim. There are no ladies in here breast feeding, only the boy and what looks like his baby sitter locking lips on a red church pew. The lights are low along the wall. The soft light casts a mysterious undertone, shadows leaning in multiple directions. The red fabric forms the seat and back of the pew. The babysitter's dental braces peek out from her mouth. The wood of the church furniture looks uncomfortable but the two do not look so. Perhaps they are accustomed to sitting long hours on the felt-covered benches listening to religious sermons. The two look engaged in their activity and appear unconcerned with anything around them.

The number on the apartment door reads, "B4." Halfway exposed, a mixed race teenager opens it. Her jeans are white and her fit thick body fills them completely. She looks to be babysitting because two tow-headed children are behind anxious to get a glance of who rang the doorbell. The door is made of cheap wood but fashioned pleasantly along its borders, elegant and robust at the same time in its design. The carpet is a tan non-offensive color. The lights are crystal. The walls are yellow. The kids looked dirty. A black teenager stands in the background.

A young man lies on a bed of rocks and sand outdoors. A twenty-something woman is performing oral sex on him. His eyes are open, staring at her. His tie-dye jeans are below his waist at the inseam. Her waist length coat is flattened out behind her. His head is leaning back. His eyes are fixed on his partner, his co-conspirator. Although she is performing oral sex she seems to be controlled, if detached. The sky is cloudy with some sun breaks. The sky behind and above the mountains are grey. The clouds are streaked. A jet plane is leaving a chemtrail, a clear billow of smoke.

Two mattresses lay on the floor behind a TV cabinet. The house is modestly and tastefully decorated. There are charming momentos perhaps declaring that its curator is both thrifty and well travelled. There is a San Juans magnet hanging on the stainless steel refrigerator. The home has a small Seattle style backyard seen through the window, plenty of ferns and bark. The backyard is unkempt, yet homely, somehow familiar, as if the owner did not spend a lot of time on it, but the garden looks inviting anyway. The lights are vintage and appear well cared for.

Two highschool students are sitting on a couch at what looks like a cheerleader celebration or a party. A young man has a surprised look on his face. Beside him, a young redhead has her eyes closed. They are kissing. Their inhibitions appear to be non-existent probably from the alcohol, various booze and beer bottles strewn throughout the house. The house is not unkempt or uncared for, but there are no signs of any cultural relics. It is a place devoid of the bright colors of nature, just drab tones of grey. In a few corners there are pieces of homemade hippy art on tables.

A black kid with a Whitesox Baseball parka and an adolescent boy are peering at a black couple having sex in a bedroom. It appears that the couple having sex realize that these two are watching them, because the door is ajar and there is a mirror fastened at the head of the bed where the man having sex can see the two peeping Toms. The look on the tall black kid is mesmerization; on the boy's face, however there is a look of boredom, an uninterested look, as if to ask, "who cares?" He is wearing indigo blue Ellessee deck shoes and a burgundy striped rugby by Tommy Hilfiger, the kind of clothing seen in East Coast hip hop magazines.

The sky is overcast. There are no birds, but there are three children behind the monkey bars under the hexagonal structure. There is a rubber mat for when children fall from the metal ribs. The boy is standing next to a girl who is peering at another boy who has his penis in his hand. The first boy looks unamused, the girl looks interested and the other boy looks excited at his action of exposure. All of the children appear to be about six years old each. They each wear uniforms, white polos and navy blue trousers. The children afar in the playground are also wearing this.

The boy is lying under a circus blanket on a courderoy sofa with a teen-age girl wearing glasses and braces. They look upward at the ceiling in fright. They appear to be spooked by something that is happening above them. The door in the hallway behind them is slightly ajar, revealing two black children sleeping in separate levels on a bunk bed. The antique clock on the wall to the right reads "11:47." There is a note on the coffee table with instructions written in bullet points: Feed the kids, put them to bed by 10:30pm.

WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

The boy is laying down opposite another person, who is sitting staring at a miraculously beautiful girl on the other side of the room. He appears to be asleep, the young girl has a polite look on her face. She says, "can you please leave the room, so I can sleep?" The boy is holding a beer can in his hand, but has a look of desire across his face. He is poised in frustration. His hat sits on his head in a crooked fashion, as if he is resigned to not wearing it correctly at this point. The girl across the room is crouched under a fleece rainbow colored throw. Her toes peek out.

LET GO OF ME, YOU IDIOT! I'M HERE ON A RESCUE MISSION!

In the background there is an elementary school that reads "Maywood" on a large sign. There is a carnival being held at this school, dunk tank and milk bottle challenges litter the yard. The boy and a girl are tumbling down a hill, arms together, lips locked in passion. A look of contentment covers the two adolescent faces, because both of their eyes are closed and caught in a moment. The sun is declining in the hills behind them. Above the grassy hill the other event-goers are milling around the booths set out for its guests. The young girl has brown hair and a blouse

YOU'RE LUCKY YOU DIDN'T LOSE AN ARM!

5 Relational Aesthetics



OH MY GOD...

A man is putting a comic with his image on it into a the magazine rack. The newspaper tender is not looking at the man, who wears a Tommy Hilfiger rain jacket. In the background is a cobblestone street. It is a market space. There is full size copper piggy bank in the shape of a pig. He is placing the comic besides others, bearing logos of DC and Marvel. There is an older woman wearing a red rain coat. She clutches a pink umbrella. The magazines on the shelf beneath the comics are rare and popular titles, National Geographic, Playboy, Motorcross EFX, High Times. The man is wearing jeans and a striped white and navy T-shirt. On his arm he wears a wrist watch. He also wears a ball cap backwards on his head, it reads NY in white. The clerk is wearing traditional inner city clothing, black jeans, old worn black print tee, nose-ring, earrings. It is wet and raining. The birds in the street behind ...JINX? stand are moping around in the puddles. The cloudy sky can be seen in the puddle reflections, here and there between the cobblestone bricks. Two birds remain in the puddle, moping and splashing around. Two police men sit in a car to the side. The driving officer is looking around lazily and without concern. He is young, younger than the officer riding shotgun. The second officer has a different expression on his face. It is one of mischief and cunning. His brown hat sticks out the back of his SPD ball cap. One is bored the other up to something. The middle age man with comic book appears to look at the police, but it cannot be certain as the man is facing is away. Or the man could simply be trying to remain undetected.; it looks as if the comic book that he is placing in the rack doesn't necessarily belong there. There are no other comics or magazines that resemble the one he holds in his hand, although it does have a barcode, a title and a black and white image that is discernable. A hooded figure occupies most of the cover. Shadows from the sunlight creep over the sides of the buldings. Down the alley way are fruit and boutique storefronts, individual merchants opening, and preparing to open their shops. The fruit stand on the corner is fully open with a display of kiwis, strawberries, apricots, cherries, rhubarb, pineapple, and black berries. An Asian man stands next to the fruit. He wears an apron with paper and pencils in his pocket, probably to jot down orders during busy times. Across from the vendor's fruit stand is an entrance to a covered partition of the market. There is a woman leaving from there into the shadows and rectangular patches of sun that is the alley. Her eyes must be accustomed to the low light of the market because she squints in the hot sun. These figures taken together, the birds in the puddle , the police driving their car, the various vendors waiting for their customers and the man stealthily placing a comic book on a magazine shelf all look orderly. No one is doing what they aren't supposed to do. No one is stealing anything. The birds aren't fighting and the man with the comic book seems to be donating it for some sort of cause. Luckily for the man, if his intentions are to remain undetected, the cashier of the magazines seems very oblivious to anything. He may have had a long night of drinking, because his eyes are puffy. The cover of the comic is centralized in this everyday scene.

Congratulations! You have encountered an artifact of relational aesthetics. It is partly a work of art, and partly a performance prop. This comic book, Jason Vs. G.I. Joe, is a postmodern double erasure, based on the comic book G.I. Joe: Cobra II (Issue 1). The original pictures from the comic have been removed, and replaced by a series of short narratives, describing autobiographical events from the life of the author: me, Jason. Speech bubbles from the original have been left to comment back overtop of the stories, obscuring meaning but creating moments of unplanned dialogue. The comic is a readymade, twice erased: once to replace the drawings in the initial comic, and again when using the original dialogue bubbles to speak back to the narrative.

G.I. Joe and Cobra are symbols that influenced a great number of Generation X and Y children growing up in the United States, especially those who played with the toys or read the comics. Cobra was an oppositional icon in G.I. Joe, used to represent the othering of a potent adversarial force. This comic uses the imagery of the Cobra "enemy," as a metaphor to illustrate the nuances, complexities, and paradoxes of American popular cultural imagination, and to reinforce how even the "nemesis" to G.I. Joe is still undeniably American. The comic replaces the name Cobra with the name of the author, Jason, to personalize the role of the imagination in media and memory, and to suggest ways for artists to intervene in these kinds of social constructions.

Enjoy!