

PUNCH

Art . Music . Stuff

September 2004



Mad Chickens

Dear Crabby

Ten Dollars

Zombies

Issue Eleven

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BACK TO SCHOOL

by Joanna Horowitz

But this year after the Fair, there won't be any school supplies waiting at home, no back-to-school outfits still price-tagged in the closet. Just me, college graduate, looking for a different sort of escape. I'm sure the barking carnies and smell of elephant ears will be the same. I'm sure high-schoolers will still gather by the Sizzler to compare dye jobs and boyfriends. I'm sure I will leave with the feeling that I should sharpen my pencils.

I might just drink a half a Zima for old time's sake. Here's to going back to school.

It's something about the County Fair that always makes me think high school is right around the corner. As soon as I walk down the midway, I'm right there, about to throw my backpack on and cruise down Third. I'm ready to dye my hair blonde, make out with some just-past-puberty stoner and pretend to be bad by drinking half a Zima and proclaiming "I am totally drunk." It must be something about the trashy rides, tight Wranglers and cotton candy—always looking vaguely delicious, but not real enough to eat—that just screams "I'm a Bulldog" to me.

It must be that the Fair is the last gasp of summer in Ellensburg. The nights are a little cooler. And you've already hit Jerrol's to get the pencils and lined notebook paper, which are all piled up at the foot of the bed. But you know it'll never be time to trudge back to the classroom until you've ridden the Zipper and seen what so-and-so has totally done with their hair.

Fair time for me meant the time when I realized that a lot of people I hated were still alive. But no matter how much I wasn't happy to see that so-and-so had totally gotten a preppe boyfriend over the summer, it was reassuring to know that come Fair everything was about to get back to normal. Even if normal meant reading Julius Caesar and skipping out on pep assemblies.



by Lorri Bergquist

Retribution

Cori Nedry leans back so that her long, curly, red hair flies all over my desk and I have to watch her fat fingers and creased wrists and Goody brush brush, brush, brush and then her head fling side to side like a giant rooster fluffing his hackle.

She is mean like a rooster. She'll shoot a narrow glance at me sideways and stump up, pudgy arms and wide waist, feathers puffed out and head tilted back, chip her head and poke her rooster eye at me and crow that she hates me.

She marches her thick rooster-pants legs into the cafeteria, swinging her lunch from home, pausing to eyeball me with my free lunch ticket, tipping her head at my homemade clothes, squinting her small, shiny eye and says, "I'm going to sit at the POP-u-lar table." She's got this way about her.

I'd like to take her home and let Lester have a crack at her. He is vicious and hard and as big as a car. Lester runs out in the mornings, heavy feet clear of chickenshit, bobbing and murmuring with one eye jerking fiercely, hops up on the garden post, huffs himself up and crows like a fat yodeler in lederhosen.

This continues until his ladies come out and he starts scraping around the scattering hens with one wing tipped into the dirt like the point of a protractor as he high steps clumsy circles, lecherous and obvious, ridiculous to all but himself, pinning them to the dirt and flapping and crowing afterward.



I can't always see him coming. Sometimes I'm outside looking side to side and behind and suddenly there's the slapslapslapslap of scaled feet on loose gravel and the surprise of his beak tearing into my flesh. I spin around and do the only thing I can do. I get him to stop by holding him. He looks around like

what the heck? I love the warmth and weight of his feathered body, his quiet muttering. I have to carry him back to the house where I can set him down, scoot inside, and bang the screen door shut so all he can do is puff up and shake off and turn his cold gray eye up at me with a look that tells me he'll be waiting for me later.

At school, Cori Nedry pins me to the dumpster behind the kickball parking lot, wrinkles her nose and laughs so her wattle waggles, her lampless gray eyes level with my forehead. In my shy darkness I hold onto long, red, curly, freshly brushed hair, and kick out with small spurs of retribution. I know I'll pay.



The Deal about Waiting

...a summertime memoir
by Natalie Schmidt Dotzauer

As the heat in the valley hits the ceiling high of 117, my plants are responding. For the first time the sunflowers look as though they might be serious about growing. I still have starts in the garden, but my sweet peas are giving each other the signal, you know, "Go ahead and die, I'm with you ...". And yet the amazing cogs of the fashion industry eek in fall apparel. My mind is merchandised away into planning the right parka, getting the lightweight sweater and long sleeves. I must think of darkness and dying grass and breezy days that take the moisture out of your eyes. An extreme dichotomy, an extreme urge for preparedness. What about now? Is everyone sleeping the heat away, moving sprinklers at 5 am and drawing the shades late morning?

Life is made to hurry and catch a deal, then wait for the carrots to grow. All the while you hunch over soft earth wondering where all the aphids came from as you scour the beets. You can mark time with the blossoming of a new infestation in the garden, the rate at which a remodel of a bathroom progresses or perhaps how long you need to wait for the pleated wool skirt with large buttons to get reduced, go on sale, get marked down and clearanced with an additional 30 percent off at the register. As a science teacher once told me, "Time will pass, will you?"





10 Dollars

by Joanna Horowitz

I sold my soul for ten dollars at a pawnshop, pressed the door open and with the money tucked into my shoe, stepped onto a dirty street.

I bought a cup of coffee in a diner with a train circling above the booths, and the waitress, named Irene, looked like a stripper I knew in another life. Time ticked by like a bomb, counting down to something on the tip of my tongue. I left the cafe with nine dollars and a slight buzz. Irene's eyes followed me like smoke, which I let curl about me for a minute.

At the crosswalk, I eyed the traffic, pondering if the afterlife would take me soulless.

Darkness poured slowly, caressed like flesh to flesh.

I paused in front of a door, climbed a dark stairwell and meandered around desperation that writhed to music rattling my chest. Two dollars for escape—I pressed it like charity into an outstretched hand.

Hand through hair, hand over face. Cold glass clasped between colder palms and fiery oil peered up at me. I fell to the couch, feeling time hold my wrists down and suck the fight out.

I blinked, he blinked. I imagined there was something glorious tattooed on his bloodstream, but in the dark there were just heavy eyelids. In a moment that lasted an hour, he put down his cigarette, and it dropped ash on my sleeve as we kissed.

Between the walls of a bland room, we lay together forever until I couldn't remember how I got there, and I sat up, dressing quietly. He opened his eyes like molasses, reached for his cigarettes and found none—we had smoked them somewhere along the line. He asked if I had money to buy more and would I join him for coffee; I placed two dollars on the dingy sheets and shook my head.

Outside, dawn was around the corner, and I walked until it appeared. From the damp sun into the non-reality of harsh overhead lights and \$2.99 for breakfast. I sat at a table for two and looked for enlightenment in my scrambled eggs.

In thick air on a faded bench I watched a couple and another and got restless. Found a weary man beneath a tree and gave him two dollars. He said I was blessed, but I didn't feel any different.

One penny was in my jacket pocket.

I looked at it fondly, wished for salvation, and threw it into a partially open manhole.

I wandered until I couldn't remember where I was. The street was lined with yawning stores.

Pawnshop—Open.

I pressed the door inward, stepped up to the counter and sold my soul for ten dollars.

Joanna Thomas

Enduring the Inventory of His Previous Loves

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a film by Casey Wagner

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man coming to grips with his
inability to grow a beard.

5:00

5:30

6:00 Friday, September 3, 2004

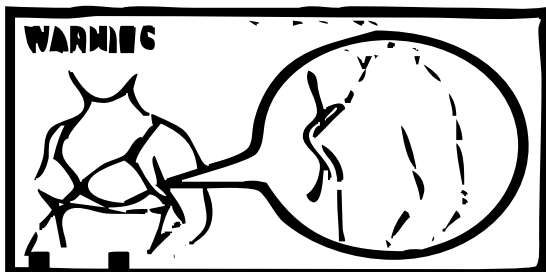
6:30 Gallery One – Upstairs

BEARD

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Photography by Tighe McGillivray - Edited by Donna Stack - Remastered by Stefan Scherperel

Dear Crabby



by Vic McNamara

Punch magazine debuts a new feature this month, Dear Crabby by erstwhile horoscope writer and noted bon vivant Vic McNamara. "Crabby" will answer any and all questions, actual or hypothetical, to the best of his limited ability. His advice is intended primarily to make readers' lives as miserable as his own. So if you've got love questions, an alcoholic parent or a troubled friend, ask Crabby at submit@punchzine.com. He'll be sure to answer you right here in the pages of Punch.

Dear Crabby,

I went out with this guy "Mickey" the other night. I really like him. He's hot, has a sweet car and seems to really dig me. But I noticed something weird about him on our date. When we went out for dinner, he sat down, picked up his fork and held it really close to his face, turning it over and over. He called the waitress over and told her he couldn't eat with a bent fork. The waitress was getting really mad, because he kept sending back forks. When she came over the fifth time, she asked what his problem was, and he stabbed her in the hand with a fork! Then he screamed at her and said the fork was ruined, and could she please bring a new one. I don't know what to do, Crabby. He's really hot. Did I say that already?

— Forkless in Ellensburg

Dear Forkless,

I know what you're going through. Many of my girlfriends have stabbed wait staff, and it's an awkward situation even when they deserve it. My advice: tip extra. As to whether you go out with him again, I really couldn't care any less. I don't know why you're wasting my time. Go out with him, don't go out with him—it don't matter to Crabby. I guess, yeah, what the hell. Go out with your stupid-ass fork-stabbing hot rod enthusiast. Just never write to me about it again. Deal?

— Crabby

Dear Crabby,

My name is "Bob." I work at a computer technical support call center. I'm 35, a bit overweight and kinda losing my hair. But the friends I play D&D with tell me I'm OK looking. After work every day, I go to the local grocery store. There's this girl that works there, "Katrina," and she always smiles at me while she's bagging my stuff. One night last week I needed a new steak knife, some rope, a couple bags of ice, hair dye and rubber gloves because washing dishes irritates my eczema. I noticed "Katrina" didn't smile at me that day. She just stared at the ground. I thought maybe she was having a bad day, so I asked how she was. She handed me my bag then called security. A fat guard grabbed me by the arm and escorted me out. He didn't even tell me why. So, I was thinking, should I ask her out?
 - Lonely in Seattle

Dear Lonely,

I have no idea why "Katrina" suddenly cooled off. You sound like a perfectly nice guy, not creepy in the least. That's sarcasm, by the way, you pathetic freak show. I'm surprised anyone talks to you at all. My advice—if you've already ruled out suicide—is stop trying to impress nice girls. What you need is someone as desperate as you are. Skip the grocery store; try the bus station. If that doesn't work, maybe one of the guys in your D&D group will give you a sympathy rub after a couple wine coolers.
 - Crabby

Dear Crabby,

I've got this friend "Lou" who likes to steal shoes from bowling alleys. He usually tries to get ones that look like they belong to chicks. The guy's really putting a damper on my bowling nights, because after he grabs the shoes, he gets in his car, cranks up the Dead Kennedys and sniffs the shoes. Is that weird? Should I find a new bowling partner?
 - Ball-less in Ellensburg

Dear Ball-less,

Sounds like you have two questions, really. First, is it weird? No, we've all sniffed women's shoes at one point or another. Most of us just choose to do it in the privacy of our own homes—or other people's homes while they're on vacation. Second, should you find a new bowling partner? I think the real question is what kind of loser bowls with a shoe-sniffing freak and then sits down to write a letter about it? Doesn't anyone out there have any interesting problems? It's a fucking loser parade in here. Jesus Christ! Every fucking question! This is why I drink.
 - Crabby

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