

# THE HOLLY BIBBLE OF BABBLE ON

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[SAMPLE EXCERPT]

## Prelude

The turn of the millennium was being trumpeted by advertisers, Hell-holed by preachers and raving street-madmen. Some said the end of the world was near — Jesus would return to punish all sinners.

Others proclaimed it the best time to buy a new car.

## Overture

In the waning weeks of 1999, Senator Bane's shriveled penis was a mournful reminder of his standing in the polls. Never had his popularity been so low. And he hadn't had an erection since early July.

With the U.S. Congress in winter recess, the 53-year-old lawmaker was back in his Birmingham office. Five empty boxes of doughnuts lay strewn on his desk (his morning breakfast!) Food had become a replacement for sex. The desire was there but the wangger unwilling. So the Senator now was in excess of 300 pounds.

Bane swung his hippo-sized haunches in the big swivel chair and turned toward the window. His view from nineteen floors up was blurred by the rain. For the umpteenth time since the trial ended last June, the Senator's brain replayed the events that led to the limping of both cock and career:

The previous January, Senator Bane and his wife Dolores attended a premier at The New York Museum of Modern Art. *Crucifax*, the latest work by Jon LaRue was to

be unveiled. At the time, the name Jon LaRue was not well known outside New York art circles. His most celebrated work during that era was *Book Burning Bush* — a performance art piece during which he set fire to his pubic hair on the steps of The New York Public Library.

The notoriety LaRue gained after the performance of *Book Burning Bush* secured him a quarter-million dollar grant from the Government to further the development of his budding artistic talents. Senator Bane wanted to witness first-hand what the taxpayers were getting for all that money.

The evening began inauspiciously enough: an art museum filled with high society types nibbling caviar on crackers and sipping red wine served by flamboyant homosexual waiters. In the center of the room stood a wooden outhouse with a crescent moon cut in the door. It reminded the Senator of his childhood days on a farm in rural Alabama. Sprinkled throughout the well-to-do crowd were the *artistes*: the pretentious poets, painters, and posers who longed to be government funded like LaRue. The *artistes* could be spotted not only by their offbeat hairdos and rummage sale clothing, but more by they way they gobbled and guzzled the free catered food and wine. Some even brought along doggie bags to maximize their quarry.

Fat Lucius Bane and his tubby wife Dolores made their way through the sophisticated crowd. At that time the Senator was a cottonseed shy of 280 pounds. His wife weighed in at a solid 220. Together they cut a swath through the tuxedoed minglers like two beached whales at a picnic for penguins. Moving unswervingly toward the table of food, making small talk along the way, Lucius and

Dolores's hillbilly accents left pockets of snickering whispers in their wake. But once the *artistes* in the crowd caught wind that the over-stuffed hayseed was Chairman of the Senate Arts Committee, they sucked up to him like flies on a two-day-old turd.

One of the *artistes* told the Senator he aspired to paint a circle around New York "...as a signal to extraterrestrials."

One wanted to start a Circus for Crickets. Another had written a One Woman Play that consisted of only two words. Each claimed their project would "...revolutionize Art," or "...change the course of Western Civilization." One even claimed he had written a musical "...that *must* be performed within the next two years to save the world from total annihilation."

Just as this particular grant-seeker began telling the Senator the storyline of his world-saving musical, the gallery suddenly went dark. A murmur of muttering spread through the room as a flurry of activity could be heard from the vicinity of the outhouse. Ear-splitting clanks of hammers against nails jarred the upper-crust crowd into silence. The hammering sounds ended abruptly. A crimson-red spotlight ripped across the room: revealing the featured artist Jon LaRue. Only his face was touched by the beam, creating the appearance that his head was suspended in mid-air. His dark beard and shoulder-length hair blended into the blackness that swam like an oil-spill around him. Two eyes the color of coal stared unflinchingly outward like taxidermy marbles. Lips pursed tightly as if enduring excruciating pain.

The spotlight began to widen, shifting from crimson to El Greco green. Gasps rippled through the shocked gala crowd when they saw LaRue's blood-dripping outstretched hands impaled to the outhouse door. A six-inch spike

shish-ka-bobbed his feet. He hung there completely naked except for a small crown of thorns that encircled his scrotum. And to bottom it off, a .357 Magnum was hanging precariously out of his ass. The crowd *oohed* and *ahhed* at first sight of the impaled artist. Senator Bane was so aghast he farted.

The lighting changed from El Greco green to a vitamin-rich-urine-yellow as Jon LaRue twisted his agonized body, causing the outhouse door to creak open halfway. Inside, a fax machine was perched over the toilet hole. With a whirl and a hum some fax-paper rolled from the machine like a tongue in slow motion. A woman, dressed as a nun, walked up and tore off the freshly spewed paper. "These messages," she announced to the mouth-agape crowd, "are being faxed here from all around the world!"

Small pockets of applause erupted in the room and spread like herpes in a hot tub.

"This one is from Oslo, Norway!" the nun yelled before reading aloud from the page: "It says: 'Follow me, I will make you fishers of men!'"

One of the swishy-bunned waiters was overheard commenting: "Mm, sounds yummy."

Again, the applause was sporadic at first. But when the socialites noticed the enthusiasm of the *artistes*, they clapped as if begging an encore from a pianist at Carnegie Hall.

The faux nun tore off another piece of fax paper and handed it to a mustachioed man in the crowd. "This one's from Berlin!" she called out, gesturing for the man to read it.

"Blessed are the meek," recited the man with a thick Brooklyn accent, "for they shall inherit the earth!"

The applause became thunderous, led by the *artistes*. The socialites followed like lemmings. A voluptuous woman in a *Bob Mackey* gown, with cleavage busting out like spring all over, wiggled up to the outhouse and grabbed the next fax, eager to show off her new dress and liposuction.

“From Buenos Aires!” she proclaimed, then read with bravura: “Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on!”

The museum crowd whistled and whooped, spilling wine from wildly clapping hands. *Crucifax*, by Jon LaRue was a hit. An esteemed art critic for *The New York Times* would later spume a gusher of praise from the bottomless well of an online thesaurus.

“Well I never—!” hissed Dolores, the Senator's wife, her eyes bulging *Beaujolais*-red.

Lucius stood next to her. Arms crossed. Scowling. Motionless as a wooden tobacco store Indian Chief. He didn't know much about art, by golly, but he damn well knew trash when he saw it!

Suddenly the pseudo-nun handed the Senator a fax message fresh from the crapper to which the artist was nailed: “It is easier to pass through the eye of a needle than it is to enter the Kingdom of God,” Bane silently read. The message was sent from Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The Alabama Senator lost all control. Furiously, he crumpled the paper and tossed it at the naked man with skewered palms.

“Wait'll I git back to Washington, Young Man,” Bane boomed in his deep Southern drawl, “I'll fix your squirrely little wagon!”

He stormed for the exit with Dolores in tow. *Artistes* and socialites cleared a wide path.

"Let those without sin amongst you cast the first stone!" LaRue railed as the Banes made their exit toward the door.

Soon as the Senator got into the hallway, he up-chucked the crackers and caviar dip, coughing it into a round sandpit ashtray that stood by the elevator doors. Two or three gut wrenching volleys was all it took to fill the receptacle to the brim. With a monogrammed handkerchief she'd kept thirty years — since their wedding — Dolores bent down and wiped the drool from her husband's double chin.

The door leading into the gallery was open. The spittle-mouthed Bane and his Misses could see the crowd clapping inside, yelling "Bravo!" and "Brilliant!" and "More! Give us more!" The woman in the nun's habit took a theatrical bow. LaRue merely nodded his head in acknowledgement as blood dribbled down off his toes to the flowers the audience was throwing just beneath his carpentered feet.

"What's this world comin' to?" Bane wheezed as his wife wiped the slobber from both corners of his mouth. Then he heaved some more chunks from his stomach. They splashed in the chrome-rimmed ashtray swamp of puke and crumpled cigarette butts.

"Hey," quipped a stocky black security guard standing nearby the Banes, "Be sure you sign that ashtray before ya leave. It's better'n half the stuff that passes for art around here."

"What I saw last night," the Senator told the group of reporters assembled for a press conference the next day, "was an affront to decency and a crim'nal waste a' the taxpayer's money. I plan on findin' who's responsible and puttin' 'em in prison where they dang well belong!"



Polls showed public sentiment was firmly behind the Senator in his stand against “perverted art.” His office was flooded with letters of support, not just from his constituents but from voters all over the country. Bane was getting national media attention that enhanced his stature on Capitol Hill. Best of all it brightened his prospects for a future run at the Presidency. As Chairman of the Senate Arts Committee, he convinced a Federal Prosecutor to file charges against LaRue for “misuse of public funds.” The Prosecutor warned Bane that they were on shaky legal ground, but the Senator adamantly insisted. He felt confident that a jury of decent, hard-working American citizens would agree with him that La Rue’s *Crucifax* was nothing more than sacrilegious smut. The government could then charge the overrated performance artist with misappropriating the money it gave him to create “a work of art.” In Bane’s mind, the case was ironclad.

In a matter of weeks, Lucius Arnold Bane went from obscure Alabama Senator to Household Name (a requisite for anyone with national political ambitions.) He became a sought after guest on TV talk shows and gave numerous interviews to newspapers and magazines. Reporters would be lying in wait at the Capitol steps every morning to register his comments. Cameras would flash as Bane stepped from his limo. Microphones would jab toward his flabby-jowled face. Suddenly the world became eager to hear what the Senator had to say about everything under the sun: be it depletion of the ozone layer or the latest War Over Oil.

It was February of 1999 when Senator Bane lunched with Republican Party leaders. The Chairman of the National Selection Committee spoke first:

“Lucius, we think you should run for office next year.”

“Of course I’m gonna run, Gentlemen,” the Senator replied in his congenial Southern manner, “You know I wouldn’t go givin’ up my seat to no Democrat.”

“We’re talking about the Presidency, Lucius.”

Those words bounced around Bane’s brain like two dice on a hot Vegas crap table. His career was on a roll. Nothing could stop him now. Every throw was coming up seven.

The movers and shakers of the Grand Old Party took turns citing reasons why Senator Bane could very well be the man to pave their way back into the White House:

“Recent polls show voter recognition of your name is running neck and neck with all the other candidates.”

“We’ve had media analysts measure your ‘likeability factor’ from videos of your recent talk show appearances. All factors indicate you’ve got what it takes to mount a successful national campaign. Although most of the analysts agree you need to lose a few pounds.”

“Why, Gentleman,” the Senator blushed, “this whole thing’s got me speechless. Abs’lutely speechless. Any a’ you Boys ever heard of a politician bein’ speechless?”

They all chuckled.

“You’re our man, Lucius,” said a Party stalwart, “all you have to do is say the word.”

Bane said the word. And the race was on. As the table full of powerful men poured stiff drinks and puffed long Honduran cigars, the Alabama Senator remembered the very first report card he brought home from grade school. All A’s.

“You keep this is up, Son,” his Father beamed brightly, “and someday you’ll be President of the Yoo-nited States.”

Lucius Bane started laying the groundwork for his Presidential Campaign by late May. Around that same time the Crucifax Trial of Jon LaRue had begun in Washington.

The Trial lasted only three weeks into June. It was front-page news almost every single day. Senator Bane was a witness for the prosecution:

“Not only was it a crime against the people of the Yoonited States of Amer’ca, it was a crime against hyoo-manity. A crime against Nay-cha. A crime against Mutha-hood ‘n apple pie ‘n all we Amer’cans hold dear. An’ worst of all, it was a crime against Gawd Almighty His-self!”

He played to the gallery like a master politician, delivering each statement like a campaign trail speech. His words would be printed in newspapers all around the country. Ten-second sound bites were plucked from his testimony and repeated on network newscasts.

Like a flawless pearl necklace, Senator Bane’s career had been a constant string of successes. Elected to Student Council in the seventh grade. He won every election after that: one term in the U.S. House of Representatives and four consecutive terms in the Senate. Now he had finally set his sights on every American’s ultimate dream house: the one with the fountains and wrought iron fence at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

In the first few days of the summer of ‘99, the life of Lucius Arnold Bane was a classic American Success Story.

Until Jon LaRue took the stand.

The attorney for the defense was Sheila Norwood, a slick Jewish lawyer renown for representing high profile ACLU cases. *The United States Government v. Jon LaRue* was an emotionally charged case that polarized American society. There were those who supported LaRue and his inalienable artistic right to be nailed to an outhouse. And there were those who felt dregs like LaRue should be shot or at least locked up in jail. Ms. Sheila Norwood, Esquire,

waved all applicable fees to defend the beleaguered artist. In her opening statement she quoted Salman Rushdie:

*“What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist.”*

Ms. Norwood introduced evidence refuting the allegations that her client had pocketed the grant money. She presented documented proof that LaRue gave ten thousand dollars to twenty-four different environmental groups: one in each of the cities from which the Biblical messages were faxed. This alone totaled \$240,000. The ten thousand dollars left over from the quarter-million was used to finance construction of the outhouse, rental of the fax machine, the spotlight, and the wine and hors d’oeuvres that were served to the guests.

“The nails,” Norwood added, “were donated by a friend of the artist who works in the construction industry.”

Jon LaRue hobbled to the witness stand. Still on crutches, his feet were not yet fully healed from the nail wound administered five months before.

When he held up his right hand to take the oath, everyone in the courtroom, including the jury, could see the large purple scar in the center of his palm. Clearly, here was a man truly willing to suffer greatly to purvey his artistic vision.

“What is the significance of the twenty-four cities you had the fax messages sent from?” Ms. Norwood asked LaRue in front of the Court.

“They represent the twenty-four time zones around the world,” the perforated performance artist replied. His voice sounded humble and gushed with sincerity. “With all due respect for Senator Bane, I’m afraid he’s grossly

misinterpreted my work. You see, *Crucifax* wasn't intended to be a religious statement at all, even though I did incorporate some popular religious imagery to make its message more universal. My intention was to make a purely ecological statement. The outhouse symbolized the planet Earth and what we've done to it. I'm sure everyone can see we've turned it into a toilet. The fax machine is a symbol of technology, the very same technology that has befouled our beautiful planet. Nailing myself to the outhouse was my way of showing that there's no escape from the mess we've made. Having fax messages sent from all over the world was my way of saying we're all in this toilet *together*. And together we must work to turn this polluted Hell we've created into a perfect Heaven on Earth."

Overnight the tide of public sentiment turned against Senator Bane. Suddenly the left-leaning media was comparing him to Hitler, calling him a book burner. A censor of the arts. A man turning America into a police state. Within days his popularity plummeted like the Dow Jones Industrials in October of 1929. And with knee-jerk precision, the Republicans scratched the name Lucius Bane from their list of Presidential contenders. His colleagues who'd been so eager to phone him during the early part of the trial would now not even return his calls. All he could do to ease the pain of being a political pariah was to hole up in his office and eat...and eat...and eat...

THE RAIN CONTINUED ITS incessant wash against the window of Bane's Birmingham office. The colorful Christmas decorations outside were not enough to elevate his mood. Shifting his enormous weight from one flabby buttock to the other — he released a flatulent stream that

made the room smell like a horse's stall long left unshoveled.

Loni, his shapely 28-year-old secretary walked into his office with the mail. She had grown quite accustomed to the foul-smelling air during her five years of gainful employment. Senator Bane broke wind around Loni often, even when he was having sex with her. Once he let go while they were entwined in a pretzel-like sixty-nine. Loni liked her high-paying job and never complained of the malodorous emissions. To her they were merely an occupational hazard — like lung cancer to a coal miner or asbestos worker.

As she walked toward him, her corn silk blond hair swept down onto the delicate nape of her neck. Bra-less, her pert little nipples protruded through her chartreuse sweater. Her ample, un-harnessed bosoms bounced enticingly as she laid down a thick stack of letters on his desk.

"Will there be anything else, Senator?" Loni asked, her crayon-red lipstick glistening as if she'd just eaten something very sweet.

"No, that'll be all," her boss droned, watching her wistfully as she turned and walked away. He could only look longingly as she sashayed her sweet *derriere* toward the half-open office door. Her long slender thighs were sleek as a panther's. Shapely calves taut as a drum. Black high-heeled shoes that strapped up around the ankles. As a drought-stricken farmer prays for rain, Senator Bane wished his kingdom for an erection. Not even a prescription to Viagra could rouse the slumbering beast. His top desk drawer was full of folk remedies he had tried: ginseng, reindeer antler, vitamin E. Even endangered African rhinoceros horn he'd obtained on the black market.

The Senator resorted to these powders and potions after a urologist told him his problem was purely psychological. Bane knew he could never go to a psychiatrist as long as he still held hopes for the Presidency. The slightest hint of a psychiatric record could torpedo him during the heat of a campaign.

“Would you want this nutcase in the White House with his finger on the nuclear trigger?” his opponents would snipe.

Others might speculate he was a closet homosexual who underwent psychotherapy in an attempt to go straight. Then to prove he was neither nutcase nor fruitcake the Senator would have to go before the American Public and admit he could not get a hard-on. To the fragile, penis-centric male ego, it would be easier to confess being an axe murderer than to admit having erectile dysfunction.

But his hopes for a future Presidency would have to be put on the back burner. For now he had to fight to keep his incumbent Senate seat in next November’s election, which was eleven months away.

The radio in his office was tuned to the local classical music station. The Senator hated classical music. Ordinarily, his radio would be set on country-western. But earlier that day he’d given an interview to a reporter from the *Birmingham Bijou*, a local arts publication that he and his cronies oft referred to as “that left-wing radical rag.” The interview was set up by Charles Russell, a publicist Bane hired to rebuild his public image after it was decimated by the Crucifax Trial. The strategy Charlie Russell proposed was to win back some of the ‘artsy-fartsy First Amendment types’ without losing his voter base of religious fundamentalists. Bane had a lot of rebuilding to

do since polls clearly showed he was trailing all possible opponents.

Part of Bane's problem was Jon LaRue. Instead of fading from the limelight after the trial, the palm-skewered huckster kept gaining in popularity. DVDs of his recent performances were selling like hotcakes in the stores. He was constantly being interviewed by magazines and appeared on talk shows as an advocate of free speech. The more Jon LaRue was in the public eye the more people remembered the Crucifax Trial and how Lucius Bane tried to tinker with their precious Bill of Rights.

Suddenly the Senator's thoughts were diverted by an almost imperceptible sensation between his thighs. It began as a slight twitch beneath the overhang of his belly where his wet-noodle prick clung like a bat from the roof of a cave. Like an accordion carefully pulled by a strolling Bar Mitzvah musician, the long dormant organ awoke. The Senator sat awestruck in his upholstered leather chair staring crotchward as if witnessing nothing less than a miracle.

Bane reached toward his zipper zone. Touched the uncurling creature through the fabric of his pants to make sure it was no figment of his mind. Slipping his right hand down the tops of his trousers he gripped the firm pole like a proud Papa embracing a long lost Prodigal Son. The indisputable proof of palm against penis confirmed his perception was firmly rooted in reality. There it was. Tall as timber. Standing steadfast and sure. Swaying from side to side with gearshift rigidity.

With his free hand Bane reached over and punched the intercom button on his desk: "Loni, get in here quick!"

Spurred by the urgency in her boss's amplified voice the secretary rushed in hoping she had done nothing to



jeopardize her employment. She found her overweight boss standing next to his desk with his zipper undone. His penis was poised like a Patriot missile.

“Lock the door!” Bane commanded in the tone of a Field Marshal readying his troops to deploy.

As always, Loni did as she was told. The Senator turned up the volume on the radio. An orchestra was in the midst of Handel’s *Messiah*. Bane grabbed his secretary, spun her around and pushed her face down on the desk. Her breasts were pressed down into one of the empty doughnut boxes, powdering the front of her sweater with confectioner’s sugar in a way that resembled a light dusting of snow. The Congressional Record was under her chin. She felt her panties pulled to one side. The half-year hiatus from banging her boss was now history. Resigned once again to the unspoken requirements of her job, Loni faked the passionate moans she knew her boss liked to hear while he thrashed about within her. When she felt the familiar quiver of his pelvic thrusts that always foretold a climax was imminent, she cried out: “Oh, Arnie! You’re King! You’re King!” as the choir on the radio erupted with the Hallelujah Chorus:

*“HAL Lay-LOO-ya!*

HAL Lay-LOO-ya!

Halla-LOO-ya. Halla-LOO-ya.

Halla-LAY LOO YAAAAH!”

During that moment of orgasm a revelation struck Bane like the flick of a Bic during a gasoline enema. A plan that would not only ensure his re-election to the Senate, but could possibly pave his way to the White House in 2004. But he had to move quickly. Time was running out.

*“And HE shall REIGN  
For-EV-er and EHHH-ver!”*

Bane stepped back from his bent over secretary and stuffed his spent pecker into his ruffled tidy-whiteys then zipped up his lightly moistened pants. Newly empowered by his vision of political salvation, the Senator barked at his semen-filled subordinate as she turned toward him revealing her doughnut-powdered snowcapped peaks:

“Loni, get Charlie Russell on the horn! I got sump’m big. Sump’m *really* big! If those goddamn Democrats think Jon LaRue can make art, wait’ll they see the kinda art I can do! An’ I won’t have to shove nothin’ up my ass to do it neither!”

## Adagio

Matt tried his darnedest to make a pleasant sound come out of the trumpet. But when he blew into the horn it was all Holly could do to keep from plugging her ears.

“Maybe the trumpet isn’t the right instrument for you,” said the thirty-year-old teacher to the frustrated fourth grader. He’d been practicing the trumpet for a month — much to his parents and neighbors’ dismay.

Holly walked Matt over to a snare drum. After showing him the proper way of holding the sticks, she taught him a few simple alternating strokes. The tenacious ten year old picked it up right away.

“Very good,” she encouraged, flipping her shoulder-length brown hair away from her angelic face, “I think we’ve found your niche in the musical family of instruments.”

Holly watched as he practiced the drumbeats. Each time he repeated them he improved his control. Occasionally she noticed Matt’s eyes averting the snare drum and zeroing in on her breasts. Ever since Junior High, Holly

considered her mammaries to be proportionally too big for her body. She was a petite five foot two with eyes that on most days were a deep shade of aquamarine. Sometimes her eyes would change color like a chameleon. One day they'd be hazel. Occasionally pale-blue. At times a translucent gray.

Even though Holly considered her eyes to be her most intriguing feature, during conversation Holly found that men always stared at her bosoms. Even when the topics were intellectual in nature the eye line was always the same. Holly surmised that most men grow up still wanting to be nursed by their mothers.

Every time the redheaded freckle-faced boy would stare at her tits he would miss a couple beats. Then he would immediately re-focus his attention on the drum and regain his precision. Holly noticed how boys reaching puberty would slowly start looking at her in this manner. The same way men stared when she worked as a cocktail waitress at the Bulldog Saloon.

Holly Bibble never planned on becoming a teacher. She only wanted to be a composer. She took Music Education on her father's advice to have "something to fall back on, just in case."

Matt kept playing the two-against-one strokes over and over like a machine-gun blast. Holly could see his face light up as he mastered the simple technique. She had grown to love teaching elementary school music. Helping youngsters discover the joy of music gave her a sense of fulfillment not attainable any other way. Seeing that sparkle in the eyes of her students when they master their very first melody. Hearing their bursts of laughter echo in the halls after first performing in an ensemble. It kept her in touch with her own youthful dreams. Dreams that had

long since been torn up and bulldozed by the unflinching demands of adulthood.

It was during her three days of teaching each week that Holly often thought of having children of her own. She had recently discussed it with Kim, her lesbian significant other.

Kim was reluctant. Fresh out of med school, she had just begun a two-year internship at Johns Hopkins University Medical Center. But Kim said she would be open to the idea of childrearing in the future. Although, she pointed out, there were several considerations that needed to be thoroughly thought through. Such as: where would the semen come from? A sperm bank? A friend? A stranger picked up in a bar? Should they ask the sperm donor to be genetically screened to detect any congenital abnormalities?

Matt kept ratta-tat-tatting on the drum until Holly finally made him stop. She reviewed quarter notes and eighth notes with him. Then gave him some assignments to practice on a drum pad at home during Christmas vacation.

On the way to her car at the end of the day Holly remembered the Principal wanted to see her. She walked back across the staff parking lot toward the cherry-brick buildings of the school.

Snow had begun to fall. Some of the weightless white flakes would settle on her earmuffs and layered winter clothes. One in particular caught her attention. It fell in the palm of her mitten. She studied it closely while walking toward the school. Holding it close to her face, she was awed by its symmetry. Its intricacy of design. Holly knew each snowflake was unique. One of a kind. Never before in the history of the world was there ever a snowflake shaped quite like this. And never again would there be one like it.

Walking along in the cold winter air she cupped it in her palm like a rare hand-cut diamond. In her heart she said silent thanks to God for creating a world so full of beauty and wonder.

She scraped off her boots before entering the building. The heater was turned up full blast. The snowflake quickly melted on her mitten, becoming a droplet that seeped through the wool.

“Miss Bibble is here,” the fortysomething secretary spoke into the intercom to the Principal’s office.

“Send her in,” came the deep, friendly voice at the other end.

Mr. Adajian greeted Holly warmly, motioned for her to have a seat as he poured them both coffee. He was not much taller than she was. Only five foot four, which was usually considered short for a male. Like some men in their late thirties, he was going bald. What remained of his curly black hair was peppered with gray, mostly over the temples. He had on the same brown suit he wore almost every day. His tie hung to one side like a pendulum frozen in time. Shoes shined to Army boot camp perfection. Holly knew him to be a kind man, fair in his dealings with teachers and children alike.

“Any luck on the love front?” he asked, stirring his coffee with a badly mauled spoon.

Holly recalled their most recent conversation at the school Christmas party of a week before. He inquired why a woman as attractive as her did not have a husband or boyfriend. She shrugged it off, saying she had yet to find “Mr. Right.” But the truth she kept hidden like a fine bottle of wine locked in the closet for her own personal use. No one in the school system knew she was gay. It was not something she liked to advertise.

“Personal ads,” the caring Principal shot back. “I know you think I’m crazy — I did when someone first suggested it to me. But then I got so lonely I was willing to try anything. And it was the best thing I ever did. That’s how I met my wife.”

He plucked the gold-framed photo of himself and Mrs. Adajian from his cluttered desk and handed it to Holly. His wife was a very pretty Filipina in her late twenties. Judging by the size of their smiles they appeared to be quite happy.

“You’re a lucky man,” Holly congratulated, handing back the framed photo.

“Personal ads,” he reiterated as he placed it back down amidst the jumble of papers.

Mr. Adajian took a long sip of coffee. Took a deep breath. Then dropped the H-bomb: “You know the Baltimore School System has been having money problems lately.”

“So what else is new?” Holly replied.

“This time the budget cuts are deep. And you know music and art are always the first things to go.”

“I know.”

There was a long, uneasy silence marked by the sound of sipping coffees. Mr. Adajian stared at the photo of his wife. Holly looked out the window at the snowflakes falling outside.

“So when’s my last day?” she finally asked, breaking the unbearable silence between sips.

“Today,” he answered, handing her the pink slip that was buried in the clutter on his desk. “I’m sorry. I know how the kids are going to miss you. You’re the best music teacher Fremont Elementary ever had.”

SENATOR BANE HAD HIS public relations manager Charlie Russell on the phone: "Charlie, let me run this by ya."

"I'm all ears, Big Guy. Shoot."

"I just got this vision. This insp'ration," Bane sputtered, trying to put his idea into words for the first time, "Ya know how everythang on TV right now is geared toward it bein' the beginnin' of the twenty-first cent'ry an' all?"

"Yeah, uh-huh."

"Well, everybody's gettin' all built up for it, right? Well, what's gonna happen the day after New Year's after all the fireworks have gone off an' ev'rybody's got hangovers? They're gonna feel real let down, don't ya think, Charlie? 'Specially after such a big build-up."

"I suppose."

"One thang I know about people is: they gotta have sump'm to look forward to. I got sump'm they kin look forward to for a whole 'nother year. Charlie, it ain't the first a' January that starts the new millen-yum. It's Christmas! Think about it. They start the calendar on the birth a' Christ. But Jesus's two-thousandth birthday ain't till next Christmas. That's when the new millen-yum *really* starts."

"Could you get to the point, Senator, I've got four lines on hold."

"I'm gonna get some money appropriated through the Arts Committee to get a composer to write a big orchestra piece. Just like they got that Handel fella to write that Hallelujah thing way back when. You know, the one where the King stood up and now everybody does it? Think about it, Charlie, if you could work the Press the right way on it, I could git back some a' the art crowd vote and still keep the dyed-in-the-wool Christians too. Whadda ya think?"



“I think you might be on to something there, Senator. Let me call you right back.”

Charlie Russell didn't actually have four callers on hold. What he did have on hold was his cock. On his desk was the latest edition of *Beaverboy*. The centerfold was a naked nineteen-year-old girl whose pink pubic lips were spread wide as the Missouri.

Charlie reached in his bottom desk drawer, took out a Love-Sandwich and tore off the wrapper. He remembered when the product first came on the market. People were appalled. The inventor in Menlo Park, New Jersey, who held the patent on the fake female organ, would receive death threats from religious fundamentalists from all over the country. But as the HIV virus kept worming its way through the populace, autoeroticism gained considerable strides in popularity. As someone once said: “There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come.”

The oblong vulva facsimile was about the size of a medium taco. Its inner sheath was latex, already lubricated for insertion. Padded with industrial foam rubber to give it bulk and a bit of pliancy. Around the rim was a pelt of artificial pubic hair. Love-Sandwiches came in three basic colors: Bimbo-Blond, Baddass-Brunette, and the hands-down top-seller — Ravishing-Redhead.

Disposability was part of the Love-Sandwich's appeal; they were used once and then thrown away. From vending machines they sold for three dollars. In a six-pack they came to about two bucks apiece. For a man who was horny, this was a bargain — considering the high cost of flowers, candy, dinner, wine, and a movie as prerequisites to sex.

Charlie Russell twitched in his chair, ejaculating into the Love-Sandwich he held in his grasp. Then he tossed the pseudo-muff receptacle into the wastebasket and called the Senator back.

“Brilliant idea!” Charlie complimented his client, “An oratorio for the two-thousandth Christmas. When do you want a press release on it?”

“I gotta work out the dee-tails with some people on my staff,” the Senator responded.

“Such as?”

“You know, we gotta line up an orchestra.”

“The New York Phil. Go for the best!”

“Yeah, but I don’t want this thang to be in New Yawk. I hate New Yawk. Nothin’ but a bunch a’ perverts there stickin’ things up their buttoholes ‘n callin’ it Art.”

“Get the Phil to come down to D.C.” advised Charlie, “Get ‘em to play at the Kennedy Center. Now you’re talking *class!*”

“An’ it’s gotta have a chorus, too,” Bane insisted, “just like the Hallelujah thing.”

“Get the Mormon Tabernacle. And I take it you’re planning on hiring an American composer?”

“Ain’t nobody gonna be writin’ this thing with a dang green card hanging out their ass. They gotta be red, white ‘n blue through ‘n through!”

“Lucius, the idea is brilliant!” cheered the publicist, “Absolutely brilliant! You’re gonna go national on this one, Loosh. All the way to the White House!”

THE SNOW WAS NO longer coming down in gentle flakes. It was dumping like gruel from an angry orphan’s bowl — covering Holly’s car like a field of Robert Frost. Caught in rush-hour traffic, Holly slowly inched her rusted blue Jetta

through the maze of crimson tail-lights. Her metronome wipers kept a constant beat, struggling to maintain an arch of visibility through the windshield. She bent over the steering wheel to better watch between wipes, hoping to catch a glimpse of the road. It was nose-icicle cold. Holly's breath billowed down toward the dashboard, enveloping it in thick white plumes. She had planned on getting her car heater fixed. But now, being unemployed, it moved further down the list of priorities.

Shivering as she drove. Teeth clattering. Crying profusely with no windshield wipers on her eyes. Tears rolled down her cheeks and dropped from her chin to her wool-covered lap — where they instantly froze into a chaotic array of tiny glass beads.

She pulled into her parking space in the underground garage. Her apartment was high up in the ten-story building overhead. The creaky old elevator squeaked and squealed, finally delivering her to the hall on the seventh floor. The carpeting in the hallway had a strong musty smell that seemed particularly acute that afternoon. Holly slid her key into the deadbolt of the door. The lock was old and worn. She had to jiggle it, as usual, to get it open. These things never bothered her before. Her attitude had always been *go with the flow*. But on this day there was no flow to go with. Holly felt like a trout struggling endlessly upstream.

Her lover Kim was still in bed asleep. Her long, thick, waist-length hair cascaded over the pillows like a horse's mane. Her skin was cocoa-colored. Kim was half black and half Asian. She worked the graveyard shift at Johns Hopkins: nine at night until 8 a.m. So she usually slept until five or six in the evening.

Holly didn't want to wake her. She didn't want to burden her with her depressed state of mind. Instead she chose to deal with it herself. Alone.

She walked out into the living room. It was getting dark outside. The wind howled, rattling the large windowpane. In the distance the lights of downtown Baltimore were peeping through the low gray clouds. Like Ravel's *Bolero*, the snowfall kept slowly increasing in intensity. Beat by beat.

Holly plugged in the Christmas tree and remembered herself as a child sneaking into the living room after her parents had gone to bed and staring at the festively adorned evergreen for hours. It never failed to give her a warm, secure feeling that everything was right in the world. She hoped that the sight of the Christmas tree lights would now give her that feeling once more.

Holly looked at the lights and baubles and tinsel that she and Kim had strung the night before. The silvery star at the top of the tree was the same as the one from her childhood. The symbol of the star that guided the Three Wise Men to Bethlehem. She prayed to God to lift her out of her depression. Her prayers went unanswered. She walked over to the window. Opened it. The cold wind and snow whooshed in, blanketing her clothes and the carpet with a layer of white. The beige curtains flapped like large flags on flagpoles. *I'm a failure*, Holly thought. *I took everyone's advice and got my teaching degree so I'd have "something to fall back on" if I failed as a composer. Not only did I fail as a composer but what I had to fall back on has just fallen through.*

Holly placed one foot on the ledge of the window. The bitter cold felt good against her skin. It took her mind off

the pain within her. The pain of all hope being lost. All the dreams she had worked so hard to realize seemed as distant as the Wise Men's star out in space.

The lights of the city below reminded her of the Christmas tree lit up behind her. She remembered the conversation she and Kim had the night before while hanging the ornaments on its limbs:

They were discussing the origin of the Universe, of all things. Kim was championing the scientific view. The Big Bang. The chance positioning of Earth just far enough from the Sun for water to exist in liquid form. The billions of years of volcanic eruptions that filled the atmosphere with nitrogen and oxygen. Earth passing through the tail of a comet. The comet dust easing its way through the skies without burning up the amino acids it contained. The amino acids combined with carbon and other elements in the primordial ooze. Lightning strikes. A spark starts a chemical reaction. *Voila!* The genesis of life as we know it.

"But Life couldn't have gotten this far without some Guiding Intelligence," Holly argued that night. "It's much too intricate and incredible to just be accidental chemistry. Some cosmic fluke."

"Who knows?" Holly remembered Kim answering, shrugging her shoulders while hanging a smiling Rudolph the Red-Nose on a twig of the Douglas fir.

Holly lifted her other leg up onto the window ledge. She stood gripping the sides with both hands. The wind-driven snow whipped against her small body. Numbing it. Making her skin match the color of her eyes.

Peering down at the city below, it looked like an elaborate toy train set. Storefronts in miniature with pinhead sized lights. Little toy cars forming single file lines behind streetlights strung from toothpick telephone poles.

Holly knew that inside each car was a driver. Each one with a different destination in mind. Led by their joys and dreams and desires. Suffering in a way that no one will ever know.

The thought of killing herself made perfect sense. It seemed like the only logical way of ending her despair. She was just about to jump when something warm brushed against her ankle. Holly looked down. It was Toes. Their cat. The big shorthaired tabby was nudging her leg. Toes meowed and blinked his eyes and purred.

"Oh, Toes, you crazy kitty," Holly said, bending down to pet him. His warm fur felt good against the cold of her hand. Then he jumped down off the window and ran over to his bowl. And meowed, and meowed — demanding his dinner.

*He doesn't want love, Holly thought, Kim was right. We're only accidental organisms from the primordial ooze, searching for food, sex, and shelter. Love is a luxury we share when our stomachs are full and our sex organs sated.*

Holly stood back up on the windowsill. Her vision became blurred with the onslaught of snow. The miniature train set beckoned far below: *Come fly, come fly, like the bird you always longed to be!*

"Dee Dee! What are you doing?" Kim yelled from the bedroom doorway. "It's freezing in here!"

Holly turned around on the windowsill, facing her awakened lover. Tears frozen to her cheeks like elf-sized ornaments glistened with reflections of the Christmas tree lights.

"You're right, Boo Boo!" Holly screamed, "There isn't any God! We're all just cosmic flukes from a big comet dust bowl!"

“Oh, Dee Dee!” Kim gushed, rushing toward her distraught partner. She wrapped her arms around Holly’s frozen hips and pulled her from her icy, precarious perch. After pushing the window shut she carried her girlfriend into the bedroom and brushed off the snow while helping her out of her schoolteacher clothes. Then tucked her in under the thick, down comforter.

“What’s the matter, Dee Dee?” Kim asked, watching the last of the unfrozen snowflakes melt into Holly’s hair.

Over the course of their five-year relationship the two had adopted their own nicknames for each other. Early on, Holly would call Kim her “teddy bear.” Eventually this evolved into “Boo Boo Bear.” Finally it became just “Boo Boo.” Kim started calling Holly “Baby,” especially during the throes of lovemaking. This later permutated into “Bee Bee,” and then somewhere along the line it became “Dee Dee.” But whenever Holly and Kim were calling to each other, they never merely spoke their pet names. They always sang them like two notes of a melody — imitating the tones of a doorbell.

“Dee Dee,” Kim sang again when Holly didn’t answer, “tell me what is the matter?”

Burying her face into Kim’s dark-skinned shoulder, Holly sobbed: “They laid me off today, Boo Boo.”

“Why?” Kim asked, stroking Holly’s brown hair, wet from the freshly melted snow.

“No money,” Holly sniffled as she reached for a Kleenex on the nightstand. She blew her nose with a sound that rivaled Matt’s fledgling attempts on the trumpet.

“Do you think that’s reason enough to jump out the window?”

“It seemed like a good idea at the time,” Holly replied, drying her eyes with another tissue, “I should have known

something like this was going to happen this week with my Mercury in retrograde.”

Holly was a Libra. She read her horoscope almost every day. Kim was a Leo. She never read her horoscope. She thought astrology was bullshit. According to a book Holly kept on her shelf, Libras and Leos weren't supposed to get along. Having been together for five years in a row, Holly and Kim were pushing the stars to their limit.

“How much do you think you'll be able to get from unemployment?” Kim asked, aware that her meager internship paycheck would barely cover the rent.

“Maybe two-twenty a week,” Holly answered, “But don't worry, I'll find something to supplement it.”

Holly had worked her way through college by cocktail waitressing. She hated it, dressing like a sex object for baseball-capped, bow-legged, beer-swilling men. Crude-talking yee-haws who drooled when they leered and wore Levis that always showed the cracks of their asses. But in spite of the affront to her feminist ideals it *was* at least a hundred dollars cash every night.

“Dee Dee?” Kim sighed, holding her slowly thawing lover in her arms, “promise me you won't be a cocktail waitress.”

Holly and Kim met while both were students at George Washington University. Holly was finishing her Masters Degree. Kim was in her second year of med school. One night Kim came down to the Bulldog Saloon to see where her new lover worked. She was thoroughly disgusted. And told Holly so. Just as she was telling her now.

“But it's good money,” Holly pleaded, “and it's *cash*.”

“So is prostitution,” Kim replied.

“I love you, Boo Boo.”

“Oh Dee Dee!”



Kim wrapped her arms around her, pressed her dark full lips against Holly's pink puckered thin ones. Their tongues darted and dashed into each other mouths like two mollusks wrestling on Venus's half-shell. Holly ran her fingers through Kim's black hair that draped to the top of her tailbone. Her hair was thick, yet straight as string — a genetic hybrid of being half black and half Vietnamese.

Kim's father was an African-American soldier in the Vietnam War. Her mother was a Saigon prostitute. He kept going back to her until she didn't charge him anymore. Then he married her and brought her to the United States.

During elementary school Kim's classmates often teased her about her mixed racial background. A joke that circulated back then went something like this:

"Did you hear about the kid who was half black and half Japanese? He was so confused every December 7th he'd try to bomb Pearl Bailey."

The jokes and teasing hurt young Kimberly Jackson. But she rarely showed her feelings in public. Her mother brought her up in the teachings of Buddhism:

*Life is suffering. Suffering is caused by desire. The path to Enlightenment is through cessation of desire.*

Both Kim's parents were killed in an automobile accident when she was twelve. Up to that point in her life, she had believed in a Buddha, or Supreme Being governing the world. She believed that everything that happened in life had a purpose. But after her parents died she didn't believe in anything. She just believed that 'shit happens.' A year after the tragedy, she even bought a T-shirt that said the same. Kim was placed with a foster family who treated her like a maid. She ran away from home at fifteen and never went back. Working her way through school, she got scholarships and loans to finish college and med school

at the George Washington University School of Neurosurgery.

Kim had wanted to become a doctor ever since she had a tumor removed when she was eleven. The idea of helping sick people get well gave her a good feeling inside. She felt the Universe was completely meaningless except for whatever meaning people create for themselves. She believed life had unlimited potential — but only if we take responsibility for it ourselves. No Knight in Shining Armor, no Big Man in the Sky was going to swoop down and do our work for us. It was up to each of us to make our lives the best they could possibly be.

“Promise me,” Kim insisted as she pulled her mouth away from Holly’s lips, “promise me you won’t work in a place like the Bulldog Saloon.”

“I promise,” Holly whispered in her gay lover’s ear. Then softly blew into it while touching her tongue to the tip of Kim’s earlobe.

“I love you, Dee Dee,” Kim quivered as she pulled Holly’s white satin panties down her olive-skinned thighs. She tossed them like a horseshoe across the small room. They landed dead-ringer on the doorknob — a lucky shot. Pressing their naked anatomies together, they kissed at one end and played footsies at the other.

Kim’s body was warm as a fireplace. Holly was still cold from the winter storm outside. That was changing as Kim rubbed her body against her. Soon Holly was hot as the seashore in Rio. And rising.

The African-Asian brain surgeon let her tongue drift below Holly’s chin. Down the length of her neck. Over her collarbone. Slipping on down past her shoulders.

She reached Holly’s breasts. They were mountainous, even when horizontal. Kim slowly ascended one of them,

dragging her tongue like a slippery snail up a slope. Holly's skin was white and soft beneath the faint remnants of a tan line left over from summer. Upward her tongue went till reaching the top. Circling the dark areolae, she watched Holly's nipples become aroused and erect. Hovering just over the lust-hardened nipple, Kim flicked her tongue fast as a hummingbird's wings. Holly cooed like a mourning dove drenched in morning dew as Kim continued flutter-tonguing her nipple. Dancing wet circles 'round 'n 'round the rim then spiraling upward and engulfing it between her chocolate-colored lips.

Holly began breathing heavily, punctuated by occasional — almost inaudible — high-pitched squeaks. Kim carried her exploratory tongue into the valley. To her bellybutton. Past her waist. At first circumventing the entrance of Holly's garden of Earthly delights, knowing how easily she'd get lost if she lingered there.

Sojourning ever southward down her creamy-smooth thighs, Kim retraced her tongue's trail to where Holly's legs made their juncture. Her rapturously arousing tongue met with hair as soft as a kitten's. Holly purred with delight. The barely buried treasure of Holly's rosebud revealed itself as the petals of her flower unfolded. Kim suckled it, summoning the nectar from within.

Her tongue tickled Holly's treasure as softly as she possibly could. Sometimes not even touching it at all except with the wisp of her breath. Gingerly guiding it into her mouth like an oyster carefully coaxed from its shell — it was slippery and kept slip-sliding away from her. Playfully playing hard to get.

Finally, she trapped the elusive clitoris between her lips and held it as if trapped in a pillory. With a surgeon's precision Kim began drawing little circles around it with

her tongue. Soon the circles turned into letters of the alphabet. She traced the letters

“I-L-O-V-E-Y-O-U”

over and over several times. Then spelled out many other words — licking one letter at a time. Twenty minutes of tongue crossing *T* 's and dotting small *i* 's with a well-moistened flick, Kim etched an epic love-poem on her sweet lover's clit that sent all thoughts of suicide sailing out the window.

Holly began to writhe and moan, arching upward into her darling's face. Her entire body began shaking from within. She met her lover's prolific tongue with one final uncontrollable pelvic thrust. A wave of unspeakable ecstasy surged through her cells like ten-thousand screaming butterflies on fire!

“OHHHHHHHHH! GOD!” Holly cried into the night, causing some loose plaster to drop from the walls. She collapsed on a heap of pillows — Kim's face locked between her legs. For an instant she was at one with the Universe — whatever It was and however It came into being.

Many minutes passed before Holly was again able to speak.

“Boo Boo?”

“What, Love?”

“I wanna have a baby.”

“You know we can't afford it right now.”

“I don't mean now. In a couple years or so. After you're done with your internship. I really think we'll be missing out on one of life's great joys if we never raise any children.”

“As soon as my practice is up and rolling,” Kim said, “I’ve got a lot of student loans to pay off, you know.”

“I know. I just figure it might take us a while to find the right donor.”

“What’s wrong with a sperm bank?”

“I don’t know,” Holly shrugged, “there’s just something about it I don’t like. If I’m going to have a baby I’d like to at least know who the Father is.”

“The problem with that is you have to deal with a man,” Kim countered, “and whether you like it or not, when there’s a kid involved, you’ll probably have to deal with him the rest of your life. And you know as well as I do that most men are assholes who always want to be in control.”

“I know,” Holly lamented, “but somewhere there’s gotta be a man who’s not your *typical-garden-variety-controlling-asshole alpha male*.”

“Good luck with that,” Kim chuckled, “And where are you gonna find this Prince Charming, hm? Fairy Tale Village?”

“No,” Holly answered, softly petting the dark tuft of hair between her lover’s long legs:

“Personal ads.”