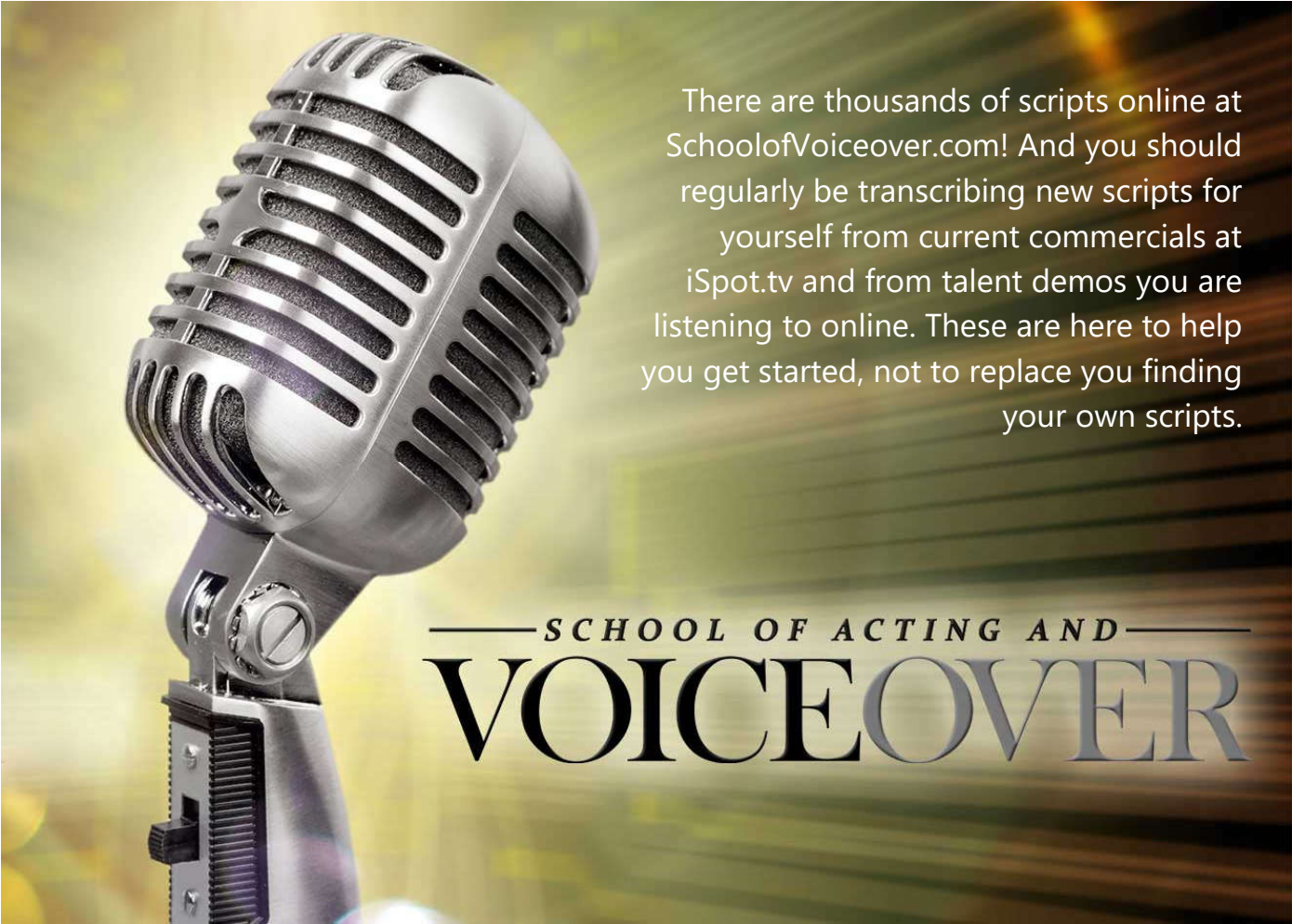


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VOICEOVER

Dead Witch Walking by Kim Harrison	1	HIGHER EDUCATION IN TRANSITION: A History of American Colleges and Universities by John Seiler Brubacher and Willis Rudy	30
Grace by Jane Roberts Wood.....	2	HIGHER EDUCATION IN TRANSITION 2: A History of American Colleges and Universities by John Seiler Brubacher and Willis Rudy	31
Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck.....	4	THE HISTORIAN by Elizabeth Kostova 1.....	31
Pride and prejudice	8	THE HISTORIAN by Elizabeth Kostova 2	31
Slow Burn - A Leo Watterman Mystery by G. M. Ford	10	HOLES by Louis Sachar	32
The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy Intro	13	HUMOR COLUMN – Jason Love.....	32
The Watcher's Keep.....	15	I DIDN'T SPEAK UP, by Rev. Martin Niemoeller	33
When Frank Met Rosie.....	18	THE INVISIBLE MAN by H.G. Wells.....	33
Wind In The Willows – Mole.....	20	JURASSIC PARK by Michael Crichton.....	34
With Friends Like These - Dorothy Rowe.....	21	THE KENNEDY CURSE by Edward Klein.....	34
1ST TO DIE By James Patterson (page 109).....	24	LADY SUSAN by Jane Austen	35
100 YEARS OF SOLITUDE by Gabriel Garcia Marquez	24	LAKE SUPERIOR	35
ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL by James Herriot.....	24	THE LAST ANGRY MAN by Gerald Green.....	35
ANY PLACE I HANG MY HAT by Susan Isaacs	25	A LESSON BEFORE DYING by Ernest J. Gaines	36
THE BLUEST EYE by Toni Morrison.....	25	THE LIE by Chad Kultgen.....	36
BREATHING LESSONS by Anne Tyler	25	THE LOVER by Marguerite Duras.....	36
CENTRAL STATION SYNOPSIS by Walter Salles, Jr.....	26	MADAME BOVARY by Gustave Flaubert.....	36
CHARITY, by Len Deighton	26	MADAME BOVARY by Gustave Flaubert 2.....	37
DADDY NEEDS A DRINK by Robert Wilder	26	MEN WITH BLACKWATER DIE by Beryl Markham... ..	37
THE DARK SIDE OF THE LIGHT CHASERS by Debbie Ford	27	THE NAME OF THE ROSE by Umberto Eco.....	37
DECK OF CARDS by T. Texas Tyler	27	THE NANNY DIARIES by Emma McLaughlin & Nicola Kraus	38
THE DOT by Peter Reynolds	28	NEGOTIATE LIKE A PRO by Lisa Bertagnoli	38
DRACULA by Bram Stoker	28	NEVER CRY WOLF by Farley Mowat.....	39
FATAL TIDE by Iris Johansen	28	PILLARS OF THE EARTH by Ken Follett	39
THE FINGERPRINT OF GOD by Dr. Hugh Ross	29	THE QUEEN'S FOOL by Phillipa Gregory	39
THE FINGERPRINT OF GOD by Dr. Hugh Ross	29	SCIENCE: It's Not Just Fair (Miami Herald, February 11, 2007) by Dave Berry	40
THE GOOD FIGHT by Ralph Nader.....	29	SEIN LANGUAGE by Jerry Seinfeld.....	40
HEARTBREAKER by Julie Garwood.....	30		
A HEARTBREAKING WORK OF A STAGGERING GENIUS by Dave Eggers	30		



THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION by Stephen King ..	41	WHY WE NEED FATHERS by Dan Davenport	43
SPIRIT OF THE TUNDRA by J. David Henry	41	THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE by Gloria Naylor	43
THE SWITCH by Anthony Horowitz	42	43
THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD by Zora Neale	42	WRITING THAT WORKS by Kenneth Roman & Joel	44
Hurston	42	Raphaelson	44
TIME LINE by Michael Crichton.....	42	ZOO STORY by Edward Albee	44

Dead Witch Walking by Kim Harrison

Female mystery/fantasy

I stood in the shadows of a deserted shop front across from The Blood and Brew Pub, trying not to be obvious as I tugged my black leather pants back up where they belonged. This is pathetic, I thought, eyeing the rain-emptied street. I was way too good for this. Apprehending unlicensed and black-art witches was my usual line of work, as it takes a witch to catch a witch. But the streets were quieter than usual this week. Everyone who could make it was at the West Coast for our yearly convention, leaving me with this gem of a run. A simple snag and drag. It was just the luck of the Turn that had put me here in the dark and rain.

"Who am I kidding?" I whispered, pulling the strap of my bag farther up my shoulder. I hadn't been sent to tag a witch in a month: unlicensed, white, dark, or otherwise. Bringing in the Mayor's son for were-ing outside of a full moon probably hadn't been the best idea. A sleek car turned the corner, looking black in the buzz of the mercury streetlamp. This was the third time around the block for it. A grimace tightened my face as it approached, slowing.

"Damn it," I whispered. "I need a darker door front."

"He thinks you're a hooker, Rachel," my backup snickered into my ear. "I told you the red halter was slutty."

"Anyone ever tell you that you smell like a drunk bat, Jenks?" I muttered, my lips barely moving.

Backup was unsettlingly close tonight, having perched himself on my earring. Big dangling thing—the earring, not the pixy. I'd found Jenks to be a pretentious snot with a bad attitude and a temper to match. But he knew what side of the garden his nectar came from. And apparently pixies were the best they'd let me take out since the frog incident. I would have sworn fairies were too big to fit into their mouths.

Grace by Jane Roberts Wood

female narration • Spring 1944, Chapter 1

Grace Gillian kneels before her hyacinth bed, her bare fingers raking the accumulation of decaying leaves from around the plants. She has long since shucked off her gardening gloves. She loves the feel of the earth's awakening, the humid, fertile smell of it.

Grace is thirty-eight years old. Slender. High cheekbones. Generous mouth. Dark brown hair, almost auburn with the russet highlights around her face. But it is her eyes, soft gray eyes tilting up at the corners, that one remembers. When she reads a poem she loves or when a student makes a perceptive comment, her face lights up and her eyes become radiantly blue. But she does not know she is beautiful. And, although her name is Grace, neither does she think of herself at all, it is in sensible, nearly mundane terms—teacher, gardener, friend. But she is neither sensible nor mundane. And on this day, as she rakes the sodden leaves from the hyacinth bed, she is thinking of John, whom she loves beyond telling. My true, pure love. A love not fueled by desire. This is what she believes. She feels she has long since turned away from desire.

The pecan trees, arching high over her and over her turquoise-colored house, have not yet leafed out. Nor has the elm by the front door. But the magnificent live oak is in full leaf. And a single wild plum and a domestic peach in the northwest corner of her garden are dizzily in bloom, infusing the blue air and the yellow grass with the colors and scents of spring.

A song from the kitchen radio drifts out into her garden. "I'll be seeing you in all the old familiar places," Jo Stafford sings tenderly. Since the War, all the songs are heart-rendering to Grace. Looking closely at the hyacinth buds, she can faintly discern the color—purple or white—each will become. Colors of the mourning.

She, Grace, although not in mourning, is deeply sad. Anna, her next-door neighbor, is sick. Sick to death. When she thinks it again, sick to death, the phrase takes on its literal meaning. Anna is sick, and in a day or two she will go to her death. And then John will leave. He has told her this.



“If something happens to Anna”—IF not WHEN said carefully—“I’m going to get into this War.” Raising an eyebrow, he smiled. “I’ll probably end up with a desk job. But if they’ll have me, I’m going.” Remembering, her eyes fill, and she sits back on her heel and with the sleeve of her sweater wipes the perspiration and tears from her face.

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

male, fiction

George came quietly out of the brush.

George said quietly, "What the hell you yellin' about?"

Lennie got up on his knees.

"You ain't gonna leave me, are ya, George? I know you ain't."

George came stiffly near and sat down beside him. "No."

"I knowed it," Lennie cried. "You ain't that kind."

George was silent.

Lennie said, "George."

"Yeah?"

"I done another bad thing."

"It don't make no difference," George said, and he fell silent again.

Only the topmost ridges were in the sun now.

The shadow in the valley was blue and soft.

From the distance came the sound of men shouting to one another.

George turn his head and listened to the shouts.

Lennie said, "George."

"Yeah?"

Ain't you gonna give me hell?"

"Give ya hell?"

"Sure, like you always done before.

Like 'If I di'n't have you I'd take my fifty bucks -'"

"Jesus Christ, Lennie! You can't remember nothing that happens,

But you remember ever' word I say."

"Well, ain't you gonna say it?"

George shook himself. He said woodenly,

"If I was alone I could live so easy."

His voice was monotonous, had no emphasis.

"I could get a job an' not have no mess."

He stopped.

"Go on," said Lennie.

"An' when the enda the month come--."

"An' when the enda the month come I could take my fifty bucks an' go to a...
cathouse..." He stopped again.

Lennie looked eagerly at him. "Go on George. Ain't you gonna give me no more hell?"

"No" said George.

"Well, I can go away," said Lennie.

"I'll go right off in the hills an' find a cave if you don' want me."

George shook himself again.

"No," he said.

"I want you to stay with me here."

Lennie said craftily --- "Tell me like you done before."

"Tell you what?"

"Bout the other guys an' about us." George said.

"Guys like us got no family. They make a little stake an' then blow it in. They ain't got
nobody in the worl' that give a hoot in hell about 'em—"

"But not us," Lennie cried happily. "Tell about us now."

George was quiet for a moment. "But not us," he said.

"Because --"

"Because I got you an' --- "

"An' I got you. We got each other, that's what, that gives a hoot in hell about us,"
Lennie cried in triumph.

The little evening breeze blew over the clearing and the leaves rustled and the wind
waves flowed up the green pool. And the shouts of men sounded again, this time much
closer than before.

George took off his hat. He said shakily,

"Take off your hat, Lennie . The air feels fine."

Lennie removed his hat dutifully and laid it on the ground in front of him. The shadow in the valley was bluer, and the evening came fast. On the wind the sound of crashing through the brush came to them.

Lennie said, "Tell how it's gonna be."

George had been listening to the distant sounds.

For the moment he was business-like.

"Look acrost the river, Lennie, an I'll tell you so you can almost see it."

Lennie turned his head and looked off across the pool and up the darkening slopes of the Gabilans.

"We gonna get a little place," George began. He reached in his side pocket and brought out Carlson's Luger; he snapped off the safety, and the hand and gun lay on the ground behind Lennie's back. He looked at the back of Lennie's head, at the place where the spine and skull were joined.

A man's voice called from up the river, and another man answered.

"Go on," said Lennie.

George raised the gun and his hand shook, and he dropped his hand to the ground again.

"Go on," said Lennie.

"How's it gonna be? We gonna get a little place."

"We'll have a cow," said George.

"An' we'll have maybe a pig an' chickens....

"an' down on the flat we'll have a....little piece of alfalfa—"

"For the Rabbits." Lennie shouted.

"For the Rabbits." George repeated.

"And I get to tend the rabbits."

"An' you get to tend the rabbits."

Lennie giggled with happiness.

"An' live on the fatta the lan'."



"Yes."

Lennie turned his head.

"No, Lennie. Look down there acrost the river, like you can almost see the place."

Lennie obeyed him. George looked down at the gun.

There were crashing footsteps in the brush now. George turned and looked toward them.

"Go on, George. When we gonna do it?"

"Gonna do it soon."

"Me an' you."

"You.... an' me. Ever'body gonna be nice to you. Ain't gonna be no more trouble.

Nobody gonna hurt nobody nor steal from 'em."

Lennie said, "I thought you was mad at me, George."

"No," said George. "No Lennie. I ain't mad. I never been mad, an I ain't now. That's the thing I want you to know."

The voices came close now.

Pride and prejudice

female, fiction

Mrs. Gardiner's caution to Elizabeth was punctually and kindly given on the first favorable opportunity of speaking to her alone; after honestly telling her what she thought, she thus went on:

"You are too sensible a girl, Lizzy, to fall in love merely because you are warned against it; and, therefore, I am not afraid of speaking openly. Seriously, I would have you be on your guard. Do not involve yourself or endeavor to involve him in an affection which the is a most interesting young man; and if he had the fortune he ought to have, I should think you could not do better. But as it is, you must not let your fancy run away with you. You have sense, and we all expect you to use it. Your father would depend on your resolution and good conduct, I am sure. You must not disappoint your father."

"My dear aunt, this is being serious indeed."

"Yes, and I hope to engage you to be serious likewise."

"Well, then, you need not be under any alarm. I will take care of myself, and of Mr. Wickham too. He shall not be in love with me, if I can prevent it."

"Elizabeth, you are not serious now."

"I beg your pardon, I will try again. At present I am not in love with Mr. Wickham; no, I certainly am not. But he is, beyond all comparison, the most agreeable man I ever saw--and if he becomes really attached to me--I believe it will be better that he should not. I see the imprudence of it. Oh! That abominable Mr. Darcy! My father's opinion of me does me the greatest honor, and I should be miserable to forfeit it. My father, however, is partial to Mr. Wickham. In short, my dear aunt, I should be very sorry to be the means of making any of you unhappy; but since we see every day that where there is affection, young people are seldom withheld by immediate want of fortune from entering into engagements with each other, how can I promise to be wiser than so many of my fellow-creatures if I am tempted, or how am I even to know that it would be wisdom to resist? All that I can promise you, therefore, is not to be in a hurry. I will not be in a hurry to believe myself his first object. When I am in company with him, I will not be wishing. In short, I will do my best."



“Perhaps it will be as well if you discourage his coming here so very often. At least, you should not remind your mother of inviting him.”

“As I did the other day,” said Elizabeth with a conscious smile.

“Very true, it will be wise in me to refrain from that. But do not imagine that he is always here so often. It is on your account that he has been so frequently invited this week. You know my mother's ideas as to the necessity of constant company for her friends. But really, and upon my honor, I will try to do what I think to be the wisest; and now I hope you are satisfied.”

Her aunt assured her that she was, and Elizabeth having thanked her for the kindness of her hints, they parted; a wonderful instance of advice being given on such a point, without being resented.

Slow Burn - A Leo Watterman Mystery by G. M. Ford

male, mystery

I never meant to break his thumb. All I wanted was a ride in the elevator . The burnished brass doors were no more than ten feet away when I was gently nudged toward the right.

"Pardon me..." I began.

He was a big beefy kid with a flattop, smelling of scented soap and Aramis. He kept pushing, his blue blazer now locked on my elbow, his big chest bending my path steadily toward the right, toward the stairs, away from the elevators.

I planted my right foot and swung back, only to find myself nose to nose with another one. African-American, this time; otherwise, same blazer, same size, same grimace.

"What's the problem, fellas?"

"No problem," said Flattop. "You just come along with us."

I stood my ground. "What for?" I said with a smile.

He reached out and locked a big hand onto my upper arm , squeezing like a vise, sending a dull ache all the way to my fingertips. His hard little eyes searched my face for pain. "Listen , Mr. Private Dick..." he sneered. "You just..."

I took a slide step to the right, putting Flattop between me and his partner , jerked my arm free, grabbed his thumb with one hand, his wrist with the other, and commenced introductions. Something snapped like a Popsicle stick. His mouth formed a silent circle. When I let go, he reeled backward, stumbling hard into his buddy as he danced in circles, gasping for air and staring at his hand.

"Whoa, whoa," his partner chanted.

"You want some too?"

He reached for the inside pocket of his blazer. I froze. He flipped open a black leather case. His picture over the name Lincoln Aimes.

"Hotel security," he said quickly.

Flattop was still turning in small circles, eyes screwed shut, cradling his damaged hand, whistling "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" through his nose.

I shrugged. "All you had to do was say so, fellas."

He rolled his eyes in the direction of his partner. "Lance wanted to," he said with a sigh. "You know, he—"

His explanation was interrupted by a familiar voice rising from behind me.

"And what's this?"

Marty Conlan had put in his twenty-five years with SPD and then gotten himself a steady job. He'd been the security chief for the Olympic Star Hotel for the better part of ten years now. Other than having an ass that was cinched up tighter than a frog's, he wasn't a half-bad guy. "These belong to you, Marty?"

He ignored me, glowering instead at the twirling Lance.

"Did he attack you?"

I don't think Lance heard the question. He was otherwise occupied, making noises like a suckling pig and hopping about like a weevil.

Conlan turned his attention to Lincoln Aimes. "Well? Did he?"

Aimes thought it over. "Not exactly," he said.

"Did you identify yourselves?" "Not exactly," Aimes repeated. "I thought I told you two—" This time, Aimes interrupted. "Lance wanted to..." he began.

Conlan waved him off, checking the lobby, whispering now. "Jesus Christ. Take him down to the staff room. Call him a doctor. I'll be down as soon as I can."

We stood in silence as the pair made their way around us, heading down the hall in the opposite direction from which they'd been trying to move me. "All they had to do was identify themselves," I said.



“Yeah, Leo. I know . You’re famous for being the kind of guy who comes along quietly.” He heaved a sigh. “Come on up to the office for a few minutes, will ya? We need to talk.”

The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy Intro

science fiction, narration, dialect

Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the western spiral arm of the Galaxy lies a small unregarded yellow sun.

Orbiting this at a distance of roughly ninety-two million miles is an utterly insignificant little blue green planet whose ape- descended life forms are so amazingly primitive that they still think digital watches are a pretty neat idea.

This planet has - or rather had - a problem, which was this: most of the people on it were unhappy for pretty much of the time.

Many solutions were suggested for this problem, but most of these were largely concerned with the movements of small green pieces of paper, which is odd because on the whole it wasn't the small green pieces of paper that were unhappy.

And so the problem remained; lots of the people were mean, and most of them were miserable, even the ones with digital watches.

Many were increasingly of the opinion that they'd all made a big mistake in coming down from the trees in the first place. And some said that even the trees had been a bad move, and that no one should ever have left the oceans.

And then, one Thursday, nearly two thousand years after one man had been nailed to a tree for saying how great it would be to be nice to people for a change, one girl sitting on her own in a small cafe in Rickmansworth suddenly realized what it was that had been going wrong all this time, and she finally knew how the world could be made a good and happy place. This time it was right, it would work, and no one would have to get nailed to anything.

Sadly, however, before she could get to a phone to tell anyone about it, a terribly stupid catastrophe occurred, and the idea was lost forever.

This is not her story.

But it is the story of that terrible stupid catastrophe and some of its consequences.



It is also the story of a book, a book called The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy - not an Earth book, never published on Earth, and until the terrible catastrophe occurred, never seen or heard of by any Earthman.

Nevertheless, a wholly remarkable book.

It is, perhaps, the most remarkable book ever to come out of the great publishing houses of Ursa Minor - of which no Earthman had ever heard either.

Not only is it a wholly remarkable book, it is also a highly successful one - more popular than the Celestial Home Care Omnibus, better selling than Fifty More Things to do in Zero Gravity, and more controversial than Oolon Colluphid's trilogy of philosophical blockbusters Where God Went Wrong, Some More of God's Greatest Mistakes and Who is this God Person Anyway? In many of the more relaxed civilizations on the Outer Eastern Rim of the Galaxy, the Hitch Hiker's Guide has already supplanted the great Encyclopedia Galactica as the standard repository of all knowledge and wisdom, for though it has many omissions and contains much that is apocryphal, or at least wildly inaccurate, it scores over the older, more pedestrian work in two important respects.

First, it is slightly cheaper; and secondly it has the words Don't Panic inscribed in large friendly letters on its cover.

But the story of this terrible, stupid Thursday, the story of its extraordinary consequences, and the story of how these consequences are inextricably intertwined with this remarkable book begins very simply.

It begins with a house.

The Watcher's Keep

male/female, fantasy (Chapter Two)

A fire was already laid in the hearth when Alexandra and Peter finally arrived home. Supper was on the table and Molensa was just starting to pour some wine into a simple iron goblet at the head of the table. Peter noticed there were two extra place settings, each sporting a goblet of wine. There was also an intricately carved white hazel wood staff cradled in the stand next to the door. The staff sported a bronze wolf's head pommel, brightly polished and well worn on the top. He knew what this meant, they both knew.

"Oh, there you two are at last," Molensa said, appearing a bit more annoyed than they felt she should be. "I thought you would both go to bed hungry this night, you stayed at the Abbey so late after lessons." Molensa was a large woman. Not obese, but clearly someone who enjoyed eating good food. Her silver hair was pulled back and tied with a scarf as always.

Peter knew immediately they had been caught. "We did not stay late after lessons today," he said quickly. "We were... we did not go to the Abbey this morning. We were out in the forest, near to the Silver Stream waterfall."

"Were you out in the woods with that old hermit again?" Molensa asked pointedly.

Neither of them could lie to her, she could read it in their eyes, and besides, she wouldn't really care. "Yes, we went to visit Karoel," Alexandra spoke up. "We wanted to spend some time with him before the Harvest begins. We did not mean any harm, we just wanted to hear more stories about the Old Days, before the world was broken and the Great Rift was formed."

Peter joined in, "From the time when there was still magic in the land, and there were elves and wizards and dwarves and dragons and griffins and —"

"Enough! That will be quite enough of that!" Molensa barked, glancing quickly toward the closed kitchen door. "I will not have you speaking such prattle. Brother Cadresean will be disappointed that you two have not learned your lessons better than this. There are no such creatures as dwarves or dragons, there never were, and there will be no more such talk in this house."

She was not really angry they knew, just cautioning them. Talking of the Old Days was considered blasphemous in the Church, and was not allowed anywhere in the lands of King Leondis Tarbane. You most certainly did not speak of such things with a Julean monk in the house, bound by the laws of their Order to report all such heresy directly to His Holiness the Archbishop in Solenta. Compromising Brother Cadresean was not going to happen tonight if Molensa had anything to say about it.

The heavy door to the kitchen opened slowly and three men filed through, engaged in a quiet discussion. The first was Bairden Oldsted, the master of this house and guardian of the twins. Bairden was a large man by human measure, with dark, strong, weathered hands that had long held a chisel and hammer in the service of the King or his Lord. His face was kind, with wrinkles set deeply around his eyes — as much a sign of his nature as his deep belly laugh. His face was partially hidden by a thick growth of beard, which always seemed to shelter an escaped fragment or two from the stonework of the day. Today was no different.

The second man was much smaller, dressed in the plain brown robes of the Julean monks, which made his pale skin appear almost ashen. He sported a wild shock of jet black hair that seemed to have been pasted across his high forehead. He could have been a wraith next to the two larger, healthy men.

He was a stranger, though the children had seen him before. He was a recent arrival at the Abbey, and they knew him to be from the Royal Court — a counsellor of some worth attached to the Church. Not a High Counsellor to be sure, and not truly a monk or a priest, if you can believe the back room gossip at the Abbey, but a man who was obviously feared by the local Brethren. The whispered dread that swept through the monastery was enough for the children to appreciate Molensa's earlier actions and caution. The staff at the door was his, they knew, and it was reported that he used it to discipline some of the less pious monks.

The last man to enter was dear Brother Cadresean. His enormous brown robe, ruffled and wrinkled as usual, was tied awkwardly around his equally enormous belly, and he was chewing on some scrap of the upcoming meal that he had stumbled upon while the men were talking privately in the kitchen. His normally rosy cheeks were particularly

pink this evening, and his shaved head wore a gloss that made it gleam like highly polished marble. He liked to sample the fine wines and ales that the Abbey produced, and it appeared he had been imbibing this evening already.

“Ho, ho there you little lost lambs, have you been playing tricks again on a poor bedraggled monk,” Cadresean bellowed at the children. Sheepishly he glanced toward the pale little man who had moved over in front of the fire, and who pretended he had not heard, or just ignored this roaring greeting for Cadresean’s favorite students.

“Ahem, I mean where have you two been all day,” speaking more now as befit a monk of his Order, and the Head Master at the Abbey in Alnen. “You have worried your dear mother sick, and you have missed your lessons today on top of it.”

Mother? Alex wondered to herself, Did he mean Molensa?

As Peter opened his mouth to reply, Molensa piped in quickly, “I am so embarrassed Brother. I had forgotten until just this very minute that I sent the children on an errand today, to Hilldale to pick up the makings for tonight’s dessert. I know how much you appreciate a bit of sweet fare after supper, and there was not a pound of fine chocolate to be had anywhere in Alnen. I am so deeply sorry to have caused you to worry. I must be losing my faculties in my old age.”

“That’s right,” chimed in Alexandra, “chocolate and almonds for bearded crumb pie, Brother. Your favorite dessert I believe. Mother, I am surprised at you, forgetting that you sent us on such an important errand.” Alexandra decided to play along with the ruse, without really knowing why.

Peter looked around confused, first at Alexandra, then at Molensa. He was just about to open his mouth and disagree when, “Don’t say a word Peter,” Alexandra said to him in the silent speech that the two of them had secretly shared as long as they could remember. “Keep quiet and let’s see where this is going. I am afraid of this pale little man from the Royal Court. He frightened me at the Abbey and he is even more frightening here, now. Not only that, but Brother Cadresean called Molensa Mother! He of all people certainly knows better than that.”

When Frank Met Rosie

Headed for Trouble, Suzanne Brockmann • male/female, romance

Rosie looked up into the deluge and just laughed. She must've been even more drunk than Frank had thought, so he grabbed her by the hand and pulled her, and together they ran for the shelter.

It was pointless--they were already soaked--running wouldn't keep them from getting any more wet. Still, the sound of her laughter made him smile, and--go figure--he was laughing, too, when she finally pulled him into a narrow doorway.

She was breathless and soaked. Her face wasn't all that was glistening wet, but her smile was so damn infectious as they stood there, squeezed together in a space where he'd have barely fit on his own. She was warm and soft against him, the neckline of that clingy top truly amazing from his vantage point.

"This seems like a good time for introductions," she told him. "I'm Rosie Marchado. I'm from Hartford. In Connecticut."

"Frank O'Leary," he said. He couldn't look down into her face without getting an eyeful of her sonnet-worthy cleavage. Sweet Jesus, he loved full-figured women.

"Do you want to...," she started, then stopped. She made an embarrassed face. "God, I've never done this before. You're going to think that I'm..." She took a deep breath, which completely renewed his faith in a higher power. "I really never, ever do this, but do you want to..."

She didn't hesitate for more than a second or two, but that was all the time Frank needed to fill in the blank.

(Italics) Have sex, right here in this shadowy doorway. (end italics) He would kiss her, his hands sweeping her skirt up, her leg wrapping around him as they strained to get closer, even closer...

She was going to ask him for it, and he was going to have to turn her down because she was drunk, except, he couldn't think of anything or anyone he'd rather do.

But then she finished her question with, "Maybe go get some coffee? With me?"



At first her words just didn't make sense.

She wanted hot, steaming... Coffee.

She was looking up at him, her lower lip caught between her perfect teeth. She was feeling trepidation both at the fact that she'd been so bold as to suggest to a near stranger that they go get coffee, and because she thought he might actually say no.

Frank started to laugh. "I know a place we can go."

He took her by the hand, and once again pulled her out with him, into the rain.

Wind In The Willows – Mole

Childrens

The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little home.

First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash; till he had dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, and an aching back and weary arms.

Spring was moving in the air above and in the earth below and around him, penetrating even his dark and lowly little house with its spirit of divine discontent and longing.

It was small wonder, then, that he suddenly flung down his brush on the floor, said `Bother!' and `O blow!' and also `Hang spring-cleaning!' and bolted out of the house without even waiting to put on his coat.

Something up above was calling him imperiously, and he made for the steep little tunnel which answered in his case to the gravelled carriage-drive owned by animals whose residences are nearer to the sun and air.

So he scraped and scratched and scabbled and scrooged and then he scrooged again and scabbled and scratched and scraped, working busily with his little paws and muttering to himself, `Up we go! Up we go!' till at last, pop! his snout came out into the sunlight, and he found himself rolling in the warm grass of a great meadow.

`This is fine!' he said to himself. `This is better than whitewashing!'

The sunshine struck hot on his fur, soft breezes caressed his heated brow, and after the seclusion of the cellarage he had lived in so long the carol of happy birds fell on his dulled hearing almost like a shout.

Jumping off all his four legs at once, in the joy of living and the delight of spring without its cleaning, he pursued his way across the meadow till he reached the hedge on the further side.

With Friends Like These - Dorothy Rowe

female, non-fiction

We value friends, but the path of friendship, like love, rarely runs smooth. We may feel jealous of a friend's achievements when we want to feel happy for her. We might find it hard to give friends objective advice, unrelated to the person we want them to be. We can be reluctant to allow each other to change, sometimes falling out in a way that is painful for all involved. And yet, friendships are vitally important; central to our enjoyment of life.

More fundamentally, friendships are essential to our sense of who we are. Neuroscientists have shown that our brain does not reveal to us the world as it is, but rather as possible interpretations of what is going on around us, drawn from our past experience.

Since no two people ever have exactly the same experience, no two people ever see anything in exactly the same way.

Most of our brain's constructions are unconscious. Early in our life our stream of conscious and unconscious constructions create, like a real stream, a kind of whirlpool that quickly becomes our most precious possession, that is, our sense of being a person, what we call "I," "me," "myself." Like a whirlpool, our sense of being a person cannot exist separately from the stream that created it.

Because we cannot see reality directly, all our ideas are guesses about what is going on. Thus our sense of being a person is made up of these guesses. All the time we are creating ideas about who we are, what is happening now, what has happened in our world, and what our future will be. When these ideas are shown by events to be reasonably accurate, that is, our ideas are validated, we feel secure in ourselves, but when they are proved wrong, we feel that we are falling apart.

Friends are central to this all-important sense of validation.

When a friend confirms to us that the world is as we see it, we feel safer, reassured. On the other hand, when we say, "I'm shattered," or "I'm losing my grip," we might not be using clichés to describe a bad day but talking about something quite terrifying that we

are experiencing: our sense of who we are is being challenged. So terrifying is this experience that we develop many different tactics aimed at warding off invalidation and defending ourselves against being annihilated as a person.

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We are constantly assessing how safe our sense of being a person is. Our assessments are those interpretations we call emotions. All our emotions relate to the degree of safety or danger our sense of being a person is experiencing. So important are these interpretations to our survival that we do not need to put them into words, although of course we can. Our positive emotions are interpretations to do with safety, while the multitude of negative emotions define the particular kind of danger and its degree. Joy is: "Everything is the way I want it to be"; jealousy is: "How dare that person have something that is rightly mine." We can be invalidated by events such as the bankruptcy of the firm that employs us, but most frequently we are invalidated by other people.

A friend told me how her husband had used her password and pin to drain her bank account and fund his secret gambling habit.

Losing her savings was a terrible blow, but far worse was her loss of trust in the person she saw as her best friend. When she described herself as falling apart, I assured her that what was falling apart were some of her ideas. All she had to do was to endure a period of uncertainty until she could construct ideas that better reflected her situation.

Friendship can be rewarding but, like all relationships, it can also be risky. Other people can let us down, insult or humiliate us, leading us to feel diminished and in danger. Yet we need other people to tell us when we have got our guesses right, and, when we get things wrong, to help us make more accurate assessments.

Live completely on your own and your guesses will get further and further away from reality.

The degree of risk we perceive from our friends relates directly to the degree of self-confidence we feel. When confident of ourselves, we feel that we can deal with being invalidated; when lacking self-confidence, we often see danger where no danger need exist. Take jealousy, for example. Feeling self-confident, we can rejoice in our friend's success at a new job; feeling inferior, we see danger and try to defend ourselves with: "It's not fair." We can fail to see that our friendship should be more important to us than our injured pride.

Our levels of confidence also relate to how ready we are to accept change, and how able we are to allow our friends to change.

To feel secure in ourselves, we need to be able to predict events reasonably accurately. We think we know our friends well, and so can predict what they will do. We create a mental image of our friends, and we want to keep them within the bounds of that image.

Our need to do this can override our ability to see our friends in the way they see themselves. We do not want them to change because then we would have to change our image of them. Change creates uncertainty, and uncertainty can be frightening.

However, an inability to allow change can lead to the end of a friendship. Falling out with a friend shows us that our image of them, from which we derive our predictions about that friend, is wrong; and if that is the case, our sense of being a person is threatened.

If we lose a friend, we have to change how we see ourselves and our life. Each of us lives in our own individual world of meaning.

We need to find friends whose individual world is somewhat similar to our own so that we are able to communicate with one another.

The people who can validate us best are those we can see as equals, and with whom there can be mutual affection, trust, loyalty and acceptance. Such people give us the kind of validation that builds a lasting self-confidence despite the difficulties we encounter. These are our true friends.

1ST TO DIE By James Patterson (page 109)

Becky DeGeorge, in the bloom of her first full day as Michael's wife, walked out of the hotel lobby holding her husband's hand. She breathed in the cool night air, the first fresh air she had inhaled all day. In the brief span of their marriage, she and Michael had made love several times and taken two steamy showers together. They had poked their heads out for an obligatory but, at last, final brunt with the families. They had begged

off the trip to Opus One, scurried back upstairs, and popped a last bottle of champagne. Michael had put on a sex video and as they watched the film they played out some unusual and exciting roles. He seemed to have fantasies about wearing women's clothes.

100 YEARS OF SOLITUDE by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice. At that time, Macondo was a village of twenty adobe houses, built on the bank of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point. Every year during the month of March a family of ragged gypsies would set up their tents near the village, and with a great uproar of pipes and kettledrums they would display new inventions.

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL by James Herriot

My present to Helen at the time of our marriage was a modest gold watch, and this had depleted my capital to the extent that a bank statement at the commencement of our married life revealed the sum of 25 shillings standing to my credit. Admittedly, I was a partner now, but when you start from scratch, it takes a long time to get your head above water. But we did need the essentials, like a table, chairs, cutlery, crockery, the



odd rug and carpet, and Helen and I decided that it would be most sensible to pick up these things at house sales.

ANY PLACE I HANG MY HAT by Susan Isaacs

Joan Murdoch helped me fill out the application. When we finished, I told her that if I were half as gifted as all my teachers raved I was, I had a shot. She agreed. Once Grandma Lil discovered she would still be my legal guardian and that my going away would not jeopardize her monthly income from the City of New York, she signed her name to my application in the rounded, overlarge letters of the semiliterate.

THE BLUEST EYE by Toni Morrison

The first twigs are thin, green, and supple. They bend into a complete circle, but will not break. Their delicate, showy hopefulness shooting from forsythia and lilac bushes meant only a change in whipping style. They beat us differently in the spring. Instead of the dull pain of a winter strap, there were these new green switches that lost their sting long after the whipping was over. There was a nervous meanness in these long twigs that made us long for the steady stroke of a strap or the firm but honest slap of a hairbrush. Even now spring for me is shot through with the remembered ache of switchings, and forsythia holds no cheer.

BREATHING LESSONS by Anne Tyler

Maggie and Ira Goldstein had to go to a funeral in Pennsylvania. Maggie's girlhood friend had lost her husband. Deerlick lay on a narrow country road some 90 miles north of Baltimore, and the funeral was scheduled for 10:30 Saturday morning, so Ira figured they should start around 8. This made him grumpy. He was not an early morning kind of man. Also, Saturday was his busiest day at work, and he had no one to cover for him. Also, their car was in the body shop. It had needed extensive repairs, and Saturday morning at opening time, 8 o'clock exactly, was the soonest they could get it back.



Maybe they'd just better not go, but Maggie said they had to, for she and Serena had been friends forever ... or nearly forever ...

CENTRAL STATION SYNOPSIS by Walter Salles, Jr.

In the Brazilian film "Central Station", Dora is a retired schoolteacher who makes ends meet by sitting at the station writing letters for illiterate people. Suddenly she has an opportunity to pocket \$1,000. All she has to do is persuade a homeless 9 year old boy to follow her to an address she has been given. (She is told he will be adopted by wealthy foreigners.) She delivers the boy, gets the money, spends some of it on a television set, and settles down to enjoy her new acquisition. Her neighbor spoils the fun, however, by telling her that the boy was too old to be adopted _ he will be killed and his organs sold for transplantation. Perhaps Dora knew this all along, but after her neighbor's plain speaking, she spends a troubled night. In the morning Dora resolves to take the boy back.

Suppose Dora had told her neighbor that it is a tough world, other people have nice new TVs too, and if selling the kid is the only way she can get one, well he was only a street kid. She then have become, in the eyes of the audience a monster. She reems herself only by being prepared to bear considerable risk to save the boy.

CHARITY, by Len Deighton

A bloated vampire moon drained all life and colour form the world. The snow-covered land came speeding past the train. It was gray and ill-defined, marked only by a few livid cottages and limitless black forest grizzled with snow. No roads; the railway did not follow any road, it cut through the land like a knife.

DADDY NEEDS A DRINK by Robert Wilder

p. 45

After months of very little repose, my wife and I grew irritable, barking at each other about everything from whose turn it was to sing, "I See the Moon" to our daughter at

3am to who – in our sleepwalking states, had placed the baby monitor in the fridge next to the long-forgotten bottle of white wine. We bought a crib from a couple we knew and tried to relocate our daughter from our bed into the new digs, but as soon as she saw her new gated community of one, she wailed like a banshee. Since my wife and I were both sleepy and cowardly, we moved her back in with us.

“Mamaaaaa,” our daughter yelled. We crouched down even lower, as if she had one of those thermal-imaging machines the cops use to see through the walls of homes rented by violent felons. She abandoned what little speech she possessed and regressed to primal screams and cries, the kind we hadn’t heard for months. Below the wails, we listened to her rattle the bars of her wooden cage. My wife, eyes closed, whispered softly to herself. Even though she was raised Catholic among Mormons in Utah, my wife is usually not someone who speaks freely to the Lord.

“Should I pray, too?” I asked her in what I believed what a spousal bonding moment. She opened her eyes. “Pray? I’m swearing, you idiot,” she said, and I could recognize the mother tongue clearly now.

THE DARK SIDE OF THE LIGHT CHASERS by Debbie Ford

Any desire of the heart is there for you to discover and manifest. Whatever inspires you is an aspect of yourself. Be precise about what you admire in someone and find that part in yourself. If you have the aspiration to be something, it's because you have the potential to manifest what you are seeing.

DECK OF CARDS by T. Texas Tyler

One evening, a platoon of soldiers arrived at a small village after a long hike. The next morning, being Sunday, several of the men went to church. A sergeant commanded the boys to kneel and after the chaplain had read the prayer, the text was taken up next. Those who had prayer books took them out, but this one soldier had only a deck of cards. So he spread them out. The Sergeant saw the cards and said, “Soldier, put away those cards!” After the services were over, the soldier was brought before the provost marshal. The marshal said, “Sergeant, why have you brought this man here?” “And what

have you to say for yourself, son?" "Much sir," replied the soldier. The marshal said, "I hope so, for if not, I will punish you quite severely."

THE DOT by Peter Reynolds

Art class was over but Vashti sat glued to her chair. Her paper was empty. Vashti's teacher leaed over the blank paper. "Ah! A polar bear in a snowstorm!, she said. "very funny!", said Vashti. "I just CAN'T draw!" Vashti thought for a moment. "Well, maybe I can't draw, but I CAN sign my name."

DRACULA by Bram Stoker

A great bat came flapping into the room. It drove the weird women away. Poor Renfield fell down, fainting from fright. In an instant, the bat disappeared. In its place was the smiling figure of Count Dracula! He was ready to claim his victim! Once bitten by the vampire, Renfield became Dracula's slave. The evil Count wanted to go to England. Coffins, filled with Transylvanian earth, were taken to a ship and loaded on board. One of the coffins contained something else as well as dirt. Renfield guarded it well. When the ship landed in England, the horrified people at the dock found that the entire crew was dead. Only Renfield, now a raving madman, was left alive.

FATAL TIDE by Iris Johansen

Someone coming toward her. It was going to happen again. Helpless. Helpless. Helpless. The scream that tore from Melis's throat jarred her awake. She jerked upright in bed. She was shaking, her T-shirt soaked with sweat. Only a dream. She wasn't helpless. She'd never be helpless again. She was strong now.&&



THE FINGERPRINT OF GOD by Dr. Hugh Ross

#1: Origin of Space and Time

From Einstein's work on general relativity came the recognition that there must be an origin for matter and energy. From Penrose, Hawking, and Ellis' work came the acknowledgement that there must be an origin for space and time, too. With the knowledge that time has a beginning, and a relatively recent beginning, at that, all age-lengthening attempts to push away the creation event, and thus the Creator become absurd. Moreover, the common origin of matter, energy, space, and time proves that the act(s) of creation must transcend the dimensions and substance of the universe -- a powerful argument for the biblical doctrine of a transcendent Creator.

THE FINGERPRINT OF GOD by Dr. Hugh Ross

#2: The Earth as a Fit Habitat

About a dozen more parameters, including several atmospheric characteristics, currently are being researched for their sensitivity in the support of life. However, the twenty listed in Table 12.1 in themselves lead safely to the conclusion that much fewer than a trillionth of a percent of all stars will have a planet capable of sustaining advanced life. Considering that the universe contains only about a trillion galaxies, each averaging a hundred billion stars, we can see that not even one planet would be expected, by natural processes alone, to possess the necessary conditions to sustain life. No wonder Robert Rood and James Trefil, among others, have surmised that intelligent physical life exists only on the earth. It seems abundantly clear that the earth, too, in addition to the universe, has experienced divine design.

THE GOOD FIGHT by Ralph Nader

"Freedom is participation in power," said the Roman orator Cicero. By this deep definition, freedom is in short supply for tens of millions of Americans, a scarcity with serious consequences. This absence of freedom breeds apathy. Average citizens do not fight for change, even about the conditions and causes that mean the most to them.



Our lack of civic motivation is the greatest problem facing the country today. Our beloved country is being taken apart by large multinational commercial powers. Over two thousand years ago, in ancient Athens, a fledgling democracy challenged the longstanding plutocracy, using politics as its instrument.

HEARTBREAKER by Julie Garwood

Laurent saw the barrel of the gun coming up, felt the madman tense against her. He was trying to lift her up with him as he shot Nicholas. Then she heard the screech of tires on the gravel outside the door. Was it Tommy? Oh, God no. Whoever came through the doorway was going to get killed.

A HEARTBREAKING WORK OF A STAGGERING GENIUS by Dave Eggers

My mother's hands are veiny and strong. Her neck has veins. Her back has freckles. She used to do a trick where it looked like she would be pulling off her thumb, when in fact she was not. Do you know this trick? Part of one's right thumb is made to look like part of one's left hand and then is slid up and down the index finger of the left hand – attached then detached. It's an unsettling trick and more so when my mother used to do it because she did it in a way where her hands sort of shook, vibrated, her neck veins protruding with the strain plausibly attendant to pulling off one's finger. As children we watched with both glee and terror.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN TRANSITION: A History of American Colleges and Universities by John Seiler Brubacher and Willis Rudy

The Century of Change is the story of Americans who combined their native skills with the growing torrent of new knowledge to improve the quality of life for themselves and their children. Like the sewing machine, countless other inventions and techniques



appeared to help this determination become a reality. The story is not a routine report of smooth progress toward the perfection of life. There have been hardships, yes -- even injustice among Americans. The balance between laws and social progress is the critical element in George Washington's "Great Experiment." It is the people -- each new generation of Americans -- who must improve and maintain this balance within their Constitution.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN TRANSITION 2: A History of American Colleges and Universities by John Seiler Brubacher and Willis Rudy

The vast lands of the west attracted pioneers who brought new techniques of agriculture. People everywhere needed the products and services of an educated industrial nation. By 1870, there were 563 colleges and universities in the United States. By 1910, almost a thousand. The tradition of literacy established among colonial Americans raced to keep pace with the dynamics of progress. The teaching of science and engineering gave the nation vital technological ability.

THE HISTORIAN by Elizabeth Kostova 1

A faint interest dawned inside her gaze, as if the amber light had won out and was turned reluctantly on me. She slumped slightly in her chair, relaxed into something like masculine ease, without taking her hands off her book. "What are those letters, exactly?" she asked, in her quiet foreign voice.

THE HISTORIAN by Elizabeth Kostova 2

"Stoichev looked as if he had something else to say, but at that moment we heard vigorous footsteps on the stairs. He tried to rise, then shot me a pleading look. I snatched up the dragon folio and plunged into the next room with it, where I hid it as

well as I could behind a box. I rejoined Stoichev and Helen in time to see Ranov open the door to the library.

HOLES by Louis Sachar

Stanley was not a bad kid. He was innocent of the crime for which he was convicted. He'd just been in the wrong place at the wrong time. It was all because of his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather! He smiled. It was family joke. Whenever anything went wrong, they always blamed Stanley's no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather!

Supposedly, he had a great-great-grandfather who had stolen a pig from a one-legged Gypsy, and she put a curse on him and all his descendants. Stanley and his parents didn't believe in curses, of course, but whenever anything went wrong, it felt good to be able to blame someone. Things went wrong a lot. They always seemed to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

HUMOR COLUMN – Jason Love

Why do we call it rush hour when no one goes anywhere? Like rush hour takes only one hour. Maybe we should have a slow hour -- 3 a.m. to 4 a.m. except weekends.

Last week I merged into traffic so hairy that people were actually backing off the freeway. And while I myself suffer from gridlock claustrophobia, once you're physically on the freeway ... that's pretty much a done deal. Do not pass Go; do not collect \$200.

"Freeway." Good place for a "rush hour." The only difference between a freeway and side streets is that the streets have a fast lane -- for bicyclists. I've sat on the 101 so long that we could have used a Las Vegas yo-yo girl...

"Cigarettes? Soda? Candy?"

For those of you in the market, these conga-line cars are the same ones that advertise "freeway miles only." So it goes.

Problem with gridlock is that people are overheating. Road rage is worst in Arizona, which is -- coincidentally, I'm sure -- the hottest place to live outside the surface of the sun. I've never understood why people move to Arizona. They always say the same

thing: "My home was so cheap." Yes, but when you walk outside, YOU'RE IN ARIZONA. I myself don't carry a car gun, but I can see it. Once you've breathed someone's fumes for an hour, you start to wonder why they're out in the first place. Is their reason good enough? During "rush hour," traffic should be limited to women whose water has broken. And me.

While awaiting legislation, we could phase in car horns that reflect varying degrees of emotion. The first horn will be polite, as in, "Hellooo? Excuse me." The second will be more condescending like a foghorn. "Jaaack-hole." Then, when someone really gets in our grill, we pull the chord and release the flatulent cargo vessel "HOOOOONK." Or maybe we'll go with car-tones to match our cell phone ringtones. I've always wanted a horn on the back of my car to play this riff from C&C Music Factory: "Chill, baby, baby, baby, chill, baby, wait."

The point is that that something must be done to relieve gridlock tedium before we all go Arizonan. People everywhere are coming home and collapsing by their spouses...

I DIDN'T SPEAK UP, by Rev. Martin Niemoeller

"In Germany, the Nazis first came for the Communists... and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews... and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists... and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics... but I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak for me."

THE INVISIBLE MAN by H.G. Wells

So ends the story of the strange and evil experience of the Invisible Man. And if you would learn more of him you must go to a little inn near Port Stowe and talk to the landlord. The sign of the inn is an empty board save for a hat and boots, and the name is the title of this story. The landlord is a short and corpulent little man with a nose of cylindrical protrusion, wiry hair, and a sporadic rosiness of visage. Drink generously, and



he will tell you generously of all the things that happened to him after the time, and of how the lawyers tried to do him out of the treasure found upon him.

JURASSIC PARK by Michael Crichton

The velociraptor sniffed. It jerked its head, and looked right at Tim; Tim nearly gasped with fright. Tim's body was rigid, tense. He watched as the reptile eye moved, scanning the room. Another sniff. He's got me, Tim thought. Then the head jerked back to look forward, and the animal went on, toward the fifth steak. Tim thought, Lex please don't move, please don't move, whatever you do, please don't ... The velociraptor sniffed the steak, and moved on. It was now at the open door to the freezer. Tim could see the smoke billowing out, curling along the floor toward the animal's feet. One big clawed foot lifted, then came down again, silently. The dinosaur hesitated. Too cold, Tim thought.

THE KENNEDY CURSE by Edward Klein

WHY TRAGEDY HAS HAUNTED AMERICA'S FIRST FAMILY FOR 150 YEARS: THE KENNEDY CURSE (Edward Klein, St. Martin's Press, July 8, 2003)

The marriage made front-page news everywhere, and a new Kennedy myth was born. The man who could have had any woman in the world had chosen as his bride one who was not rich or famous or ennobled by family background or distinguished by any professional accomplishment. What Carolyn had were certain charismatic qualities- exceptional beauty, a unique sense of style, and a shrewd, sharp, hard intelligence. The media played the marriage as a Cinderella story, casting Carolyn as the commoner who had found true love with Prince Charming. But it turned out to be a doomed fairy tale, a nightmare of escalating domestic violence, sexual infidelity, and drugs - a union that seemed destined to end in one kind of disaster or another.



LADY SUSAN by Jane Austen

My dear mother, I am very sorry to tell you that it will not be in our power to keep our promise of spending the holiday with you, and we are prevented that happiness by a circumstance which is not likely to make us any amends. Lady Susan in a letter to her Brother, has declared her intention to visiting us almost immediately, and as such a visit is in all probability merely an affair of convenience, it is impossible to conjecture its length. I was by no means prepared for such an event, nor can I now account for her Ladyship's conduct. Langford appeared so exactly the place for her in every respect, as well from the elegant and expensive stile of Living there, as from her particular attachment to Mrs.

LAKE SUPERIOR

I first laid eyes on Lake Superior and the big country around it more than a decade ago. I drowned myself in its pleasures: fishing for trout, hunting for mushrooms, picking berries in its pine-scented air. On my frequent returns to the lake country, I have been heartened to find that it remains as I first knew it, uncommonly clear, still heavily forested, and bathed in exquisite stillness. You can hear a lynx scream, follow the tracks of wolves hunting deer, or sail along rock-strewn beaches without seeing a soul. And you may be awakened in the night, as I was in my sleeping bad, by a woodland caribou...

THE LAST ANGRY MAN by Gerald Green

Sam moved forward and reached for the young man's forearms. He hoped to subdue him quickly without any fighting and escort him from the playground; there was no point in provoking a riot. The tormenter, all slum muscle and grace, recoiled; Sam had barely touched him. The playground instructor saw the white arms and dirtied fists spring into position; a second later it was as if someone had exploded an electric light-bulb in his face. He was stumbling backward on his heel, feeling a thousand needles stinging his offended chin. Numbness radiated through his teeth and cheeks, and a

little bath of salty blood was forming inside his lower lip. he had not fallen, however, and as his head cleared he saw the gatecrasher bouncing professionally, fists in the classic boxer's pose, the abysmal face aglow with hoodlum joy.

A LESSON BEFORE DYING by Ernest J. Gaines

Maybe feeling my hands on her face would make her understand what I was trying to say to her. But as I moved toward her, I could see in her eyes that nothing I said was going to change anything. I left them at the table and went back home to my room.

THE LIE by Chad Kultgen

When the lights disappeared, her hand went to the automatic she carried inside the belt of her slacks. She fingered its butt, trigger guard, and safety for perhaps the fifth time in the past half hour. It was the only visible sign of her nervousness. Their bedroom was directly ahead, the door open.

THE LOVER by Marguerite Duras

The street was empty and it was a cold night, a light rain was falling where he was driving to but I guessed we were going down all the time toward the lower city. In the end he pulled up in a little side street, stopped the engine and got out of the car, telling me to wait inside. He disappeared for a moment and then came back and told me to get out. I followed him and he seemed tense now, looking from side to side like a thief or something.

MADAME BOVARY by Gustave Flaubert

They returned to Yonville along the river. The summer weather had reduced its flow and left uncovered the river walls and water steps of the gardens along its bank. It ran silently, swift and cold-looking; long fine grasses bent with the current, like masses of

loose green hair streaming in its limpid depths. Here and there on the tip of a reed or on a water-lily pad a spidery-legged insect was poised or crawling. Sunbeams pierced the little blue air bubbles that kept forming and breaking on the ripples; branchless old willows mirrored their gray bark in the water in the distance the meadows seemed empty all around them.

MADAME BOVARY by Gustave Flaubert 2

At the sudden impact of those words, crashing into her mind like a leaden bullet into a silver dish, Emma felt herself shudder; and she raised her head, straining to understand what he had meant by them. They looked at each other in silence, almost wonderstruck, each of them, to see that the other was there, so far apart had their thoughts carried them. Charles stared at her with the clouded gaze of a drunken man; motionless in his chair, he was listening to the screams that continued to come from the hotel.

MEN WITH BLACKWATER DIE by Beryl Markham

There is a feeling of absolute finality about the end of a flight through darkness. The whole scheme of things with which you have lived acutely, during hours of roaring sound in an element altogether detached from the world, ceases abruptly. The plane noses groundward, the wings strain to the firmer cushion of earthbound air, wheels touch, and the engine sighs into silence. The dream of flight is suddenly gone before the mundane realities of growing grass and swirling dust, the slow plodding of men and the enduring patience of rooted trees. Freedom escapes you again, and wings that were a moment ago no less than an eagle's, and swifter, are metal and wood once more, inert and heavy.

THE NAME OF THE ROSE by Umberto Eco

And I asked myself, frightened and rapt, who was she who rose before me like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, radiant as the sun. Then the creature came still closer to me, throwing into a corner the dark package she had 'til then held pressed to her body;



and she raised her hand to stroke my face, and repeated the words I had already heard. And while I did not know whether to flee from her or move even closer, while my head was throbbing as if the trumpets of Joshua were about to bring down the walls of Jherico, as I yearned and at once feared to touch her, she smiled with great joy, emitted a stifled moan of a pleased she-goat, and undid the strings that closed her dress over her bosom, slipped the dress from her body like a tunic, and stood before me as Eve must have appeared to Adam in the garden of Eden.

THE NANNY DIARIES by Emma McLaughlin & Nicola Kraus

...She wants to know what I study, what I plan to do in the future, what I think of private schools in Manhattan, what my parents do. I answer with as much filigree and insouciance as I can muster, trying to slightly cock my head like Snow White listening to the animals. She, in turn, is aiming for more of a Diane-Sawyer-pose, looking for answers which will confirm that I am not there to steal her husband, jewelry, friends, or child. In that order. Nanny Fact: in every one of my interviews, references are never checked. I am white. I speak French. My parents are college educated. I have no visible piercings and have been to Lincoln Center in the last two months. I'm hired.

NEGOTIATE LIKE A PRO by Lisa Bertagnoli

Even in these enlightened days when women are CEOs and cabinet members, many still feel uncomfortable with blatant displays of power. Women are often afraid to ask for what they want because they tend to confuse assertion with aggression. Aggression implies violation. When you act aggressively, the other person will feel angry or taken advantage of. Assertion, on the other hand, means going after what you want without demeaning or intimidating the other person.

NEVER CRY WOLF by Farley Mowat

I listened, but if a wolf was broadcasting from those hills he was not on my wavelength. George, who had been sleeping on the crest of the esker, suddenly sat up, cocked his ears forward and pointed his long muzzle toward the north. After a minute or two he threw back his head and howled; a long, quavering howl which started low and ended on the highest note my ears would register. Ootek grabbed my arm and broke into a delighted grin. "Caribou are coming; the wolf says so!"

PILLARS OF THE EARTH by Ken Follett

The small boys came early to the hanging. It was still dark when the first three or four of them sidled out of the hovels, quiet as cats in their felt boots. A thick layer of fresh snow covered the little town like a new coat of paint, and theirs were the first footprints to blemish its perfect surface. They picked their way through the huddled wooden huts and along the streets of frozen mud to the silent marketplace, where the gallows stood waiting. The boys despised everything their elders valued. They scorned beauty and mocked goodness. They would hoot with laughter at the sight of a cripple, and if they saw a wounded animal they would stone it to death.

THE QUEEN'S FOOL by Phillipa Gregory

Once again the queen learned that holding the throne was harder than winning it. She spent the days after the uprising struggling with her conscience, faced with the agonizing question of what should be done with the rebels who had come against her and been so dramatically defeated. Clearly, God would protect this Mary on her throne, but God was not to be mocked. Mary must also protect herself.

SCIENCE: It's Not Just Fair (Miami Herald, February 11, 2007) by Dave Berry

So your school is having a science fair! Great! The science fair has long been a favorite educational tool in the American school system, and for a good reason: Your teachers hate you. Ha ha! No, seriously, although a science fair can seem like a big “pain,” it can help you understand important scientific principles, such as Newton’s First Law of Inertia, which states: “A body at rest will remain at rest until 8:45 p.m. The night before the science-fair project is due, at which point the body will come rushing to the body’s parents, who are already in their pajamas, and shout, “I just remembered the science fair is tomorrow and we gotta go to the store right now!”

SEIN LANGUAGE by Jerry Seinfeld

p. 42

The suit is definitely the universal business outfit for men. There is nothing else that men like to wear when they’re doing business. I don’t know why it projects this image of power. Why is it intimidating?

“We’d better do what this guy says. His pants match his jacket.”

Men love the suit so much, we’ve actually styled our pajamas to look like a tiny suit. Our pajamas have little lapels, little cuffs, simulated breast pocket. Do you need a breast pocket on your pajamas? You put a pen in there, you roll over in the middle of the night, you kill yourself.

p. 70

People will kill each other for a parking space in New York because they think, “If I don’t get this one, I may never get a space. I’ll be searching for months until somebody goes out to the Hamptons.” Because everybody in New York City knows there’s way more cars than parking spaces. You see cars driving in New York all hours of the night. It’s like musical chairs except everybody sat down around 1964.

The problem is, while car manufacturers are building hundreds of thousands of new cars every year, they’re not making any new spaces. That’s what they should be working on. Wouldn’t that be great – you go to the auto show and they’ve got a big revolving



turntable with nothing on it.
"New from Chrysler, a space."

THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION by Stephen King

I came to Shawshank when I was just twenty, and I am one of the few people in our happy little family who is willing to own up to what he did. I committed murder. I put a large insurance policy on my wife, who was three years older than I was, and then I fixed the brakes of the Chevrolet coupe her father had given us as a wedding present, except I hadn't planned on her stopping to pick up the neighbour woman and the neighbour woman's infant son on the way down Castle Hill and into town.

I've told you as well as I can how it is to be an institutionalized man. At first you can't stand those four walls, then you get so you can abide them, then you get so you can accept them ... and then, as your body, and your mind and your spirit adjust to life on an HO scale, you get to love them. You are told when to eat, when you can write letters, when you can smoke. If you're at work in the laundry or the plate-shop, you're assigned five minutes of each hour when you can go to the bathroom.

SPIRIT OF THE TUNDRA by J. David Henry

I don't know how long it had been observing me, but now it peered at me with some alarm. Then the little animal--only slightly larger than a house cat--threw back its head, gave a single, shrill bark, and disappeared in a trot over a ridge. I chased after it over the hummocky tundra, but when I got to the top of the ridge, the fox was nowhere to be seen. The polar desert stretched out for miles in front of me--no trees, no shrubs, no deep valleys, just the gently rolling land, tufts of arctic grasses, and scattered wildflowers. Yet the fox was gone.

THE SWITCH by Anthony Horowitz

She rolled over and blinked him into focus. "What?, Who?" "The FBI Guys." She threw back the covers, scrambled from the bed and lunged toward the window, all in one motion. She raised a louver and peered through the blinds. A navy blue sedan was parked at the curb. Two suited men, one black, one white, were alighting. Turning back into the room, she looked at the clock on the nightstand. She had set her alarm for 8:30. It was 8:25. "They're early."

THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD by Zora Neale Hurston

The kiss of his memory made pictures of love and light against the wall. Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see.

TIME LINE by Michael Crichton

The wind whined. A few leaves blew, scraping across the floor. The air was damp and cold. They stood silently.

"I wonder if he thought of us." Chris said, looking at the stone face. "I wonder if he ever missed us."

"Of course he did," the professor said. "Don't you miss him?"

Chris nodded. Kate sniffed, and blew her nose.

"I do," Johnson said.

They went back outside. They walked down the hill to the car. By now the rain had entirely stopped. But the clouds had remained dark and heavy, hanging low over the distant hills.

WHY WE NEED FATHERS by Dan Davenport

From Better Homes and Gardens

In 1960, 5.8 million American kids lived in single-parent families. Today, that number has more than tripled, to an astonishing 18 million. Another figure is equally startling: nearly 40 percent of our children don't live in the same home as their biological father. Today, the number of kids whose parents are divorced is nearly equaled by the number of children in homes where there never has been a dad. One out of three babies in America today are born to unmarried women--a 600 percent increase since 1960. "Children need both a mom and a dad." Why both? In his recently published book, *Life Without Father*, Rutgers University sociologist David Popenoe details the unique yin and yang generated by a woman-man parenting team. "Mothers tend to be responsive and fathers firm. Mothers stress emotional security and relationships while fathers stress competition and risk-taking. Mothers typically express more concern for the child's immediate well-being, while fathers concentrate on a child's long-term autonomy and independence," Popenoe says.

THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE by Gloria Naylor

As the late November winds cut across her legs and blew under her coat, Mattie shivered violently and realized that she had rushed from the house without any slip or stockings. She pulled her tweed coat closer to her neck to cut off the wind and stop her body from trembling with cold, and moved on toward the police precinct. The brick and glass building threw out a ghostly light against the thin morning air. She paused a moment to catch her breath before the iron lettering engraved over the door, and then pushed the slanted metal bar and went in.



WRITING THAT WORKS by Kenneth Roman & Joel Raphaelson

By itself, good writing is no guarantee of success. But words are more than words and business writing does not exist in a vacuum. What you write will always have a purpose and if you write well you are more likely to achieve it, and to succeed.

ZOO STORY by Edward Albee

ALL RIGHT. THE STORY OF JERRY AND THE DOG! What I am going to tell you has something to do with how sometimes it's necessary to go a long distance out of the way in order to come back a short distance correctly; or maybe I only think that it has something to do with that. But, it's why I went to the zoo today, and why I walked north ... northerly, rather... until I came here.

All right. The dog, I think I told you, is a black monster of a beast: an oversized head, tiny, tiny ears, and eyes ... bloodshot eyes, infected, maybe; and body you can see the ribs through the skin. The dog is black, all black; all black except for the bloodshot eyes, and yes... and an open sore on it's right forepaw; that's red, too. And, oh yes; the poor monster, and I do believe it's an old dog.....